Understanding Sino-Africa Relations: An Analysis Sino-Nigeria Relations Nigeria's fourth republic

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ABSTRACT

No doubt, Sino-Nigeria relations, have been without doubt characterized by twist and turns depending on the leadership. There have been period of docility, some administration have been marked by improved economic and political interaction. Using descriptive analysis and secondary data, this paper examines Sino-Nigeria relations since the fourth republic-1999-2023. The paper is divided into five epoch, pre-fourth republic, Obasanjo era, Yar'adua era, Jonathan era and Buhari's era. Findings from the study shows that Sino-Nigeria relations have primary focused on improving economic relations through improving trade and infrastructure development in Nigeria under various leadership from 1999. The infrastructure development cut across major sector of Nigeria's economy such as petroleum, energy, road and rails, telecommunication. China's support for infrastructure development in Nigeria could be viewed from its Belt and Road initiative. The study concludes that Sino-Nigeria relations reached its highest level under Buhari's administration with economic and political cooperation climaxing in the closure of Taiwanese Embassy in Abuja in furtherance of One-China Policy.

ملخص

لا شك أن العلاقات الصينية-النيجيرية قد تميزت بتقلبات وتعقيدات تختلف باختلاف طبيعة القيادة. رغم أنها شهدت فترات من الركود، اتسمت بعض عهود الإدارات بتحسن في العلاقات والتعاونات الاقتصادية والسياسية. تعتمد هذه الورقة البحثية على التحليل الوصفي والبيانات الثانوية لتباحث العلاقات الصينية-النيجيرية منذ عهد الجمهورية الرابعة 1999-2023. وتستعرض الورقة خمس مراحل زمنية، وهي: عهد ما قبل الجمهورية الرابعة، عهد أوباسانجو، عهد يارادوا، عهد جوناثان، وعهد بخاري. وتشير نتائج الدراسة إلى أن العلاقات الصينية-النيجيرية ركزت بشكل رئيسي على تعزيز العلاقات الاقتصادية من خلال تحسين التجارة وتطوير البنية

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التحتية في نيجيريا تحت قيادات مختلفة منذ عام 1999. وقد شمل تطوير البنية التحتية قطاعات رئيسية من الاقتصاد النيجيري، مثل النفط والطاقة والطرق والسكك الحديدية والاتصالات. ويمكن النظر إلى دعم الصين لتطوير البنية التحتية في نيجيريا من منظور مبادرة الحزام والطريق. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن العلاقات الصينية-النيجيرية بلغت ذروتها خلال إدارة بخاري، حيث وصلت مستويات التعاون الاقتصادي والسياسي إلى أوجها، وقد تجلى ذلك في إغلاق السفارة التايوانية في أبوجا تعزبزا لسياسة الصين الواحدة.

RÉSUMÉ

Il ne fait aucun doute que les relations sino-nigérianes ont été caractérisées par des rebondissements en fonction des dirigeants. Il y a eu des périodes de docilité, certaines administrations ont été marquées par une amélioration de l'interaction économique et politique. À l'aide d'une analyse descriptive et de données secondaires, cet article examine les relations sino-nigérianes depuis la quatrième république (1999-2023). L'article est divisé en cinq époques : avant la quatrième république, l'ère Obasanjo, l'ère Yar'adua, l'ère Jonathan et l'ère Buhari. Les résultats de l'étude montrent que les relations sino-nigérianes se sont principalement concentrées sur l'amélioration des relations économiques par le biais de l'amélioration du commerce et du développement des infrastructures au Nigéria sous les différents dirigeants depuis 1999. Le développement des infrastructures concerne les principaux secteurs de l'économie nigériane, tels que le pétrole, l'énergie, les routes et les chemins de fer, les télécommunications. Le soutien de la Chine au développement des infrastructures au Nigéria pourrait être envisagé dans le cadre de son initiative « Belt and Road ». L'étude conclut que les relations sino-nigérianes ont atteint leur plus haut niveau sous l'administration de Buhari, avec une coopération économique et politique qui a culminé avec la fermeture de l'ambassade de Taïwan à Abuja dans le cadre de la politique d'une seule Chine.

Keywords: Infrastructure, Investment, Development, Nigeria and China

JEL Classification: F5, F21, O1, and P33

1. Introduction

Following 1978 economic reforms that opened up its market to international economic cooperation while creating an opportunity for a new orientation toward Africa through the Forum on China Africa Cooperation, China has become the world's second-largest economy with growing influence in the African continent. (Hynes, 1998., Jackson, 2019). China's growing influence is attributed to three significant factors, its sustained high economic growth rate, its large economy underpinned by a vast population with rapidly rising income, and a largely outward-

oriented growing economy that imports fuels and raw commodities and exports manufactured goods (Oyejide, Abiodun & Adeolu, 2009). On the other hand, Nigeria ranked as a middle-income country, is one of the top 10 economies in Africa on a vigorous campaign for foreign direct investments boasting of abundant resources that include enormous energy reserves and a large domestic market of over 200 million citizens striving to become one of the world's top 20 economies (Egbula & Zheng, 2011., PWC, 2019). Thus, irrespective of their geographies and economies, Nigeria and China have developed essential links that have reached a new height by instituting a strategic opportunity for bilateral relations in economy, trade and commerce in multiple areas for Nigeria's economic development (Ogunkola, Bankole, & Adewuyi, 2008., Egbula & Zheng, 2011).

Nigeria's energy reserves and its large consumer-based population has particularly attracted China's attention. China's rapid economic growth and its need for energy reserves as well as an outlet for raw materials and finished products is a defining attribute of its relations; and the reason it broadens its investment activities with African countries like Nigeria to meet domestic demand and remain competitive in the global market (Tull, 2006., Junbo & Frasheri, 2015). Natural resources and materials are abundant in Nigeria, critical for China's continued economic growth, including crude oil needed for its manufacturing industries (Raji & 2018). Likewise, Nigeria's sizeable consumer-based population of over 200 million people with growing disposable incomes generates a profiteering alternative market for Chinese manufactured goods (Egbula & Zheng, 2011). Low-cost Chinese products such as textiles, electronics and household items fit the demands of Nigerian markets.

Within Sino- Nigeria relations, Nigeria seeks investments to improve its petroleum, power, telecommunications, transport, construction, and manufacturing sectors (Egbula & Zheng, 2011., Mthembu-Salter,2009). China's unique economic approach, the Beijing consensus, and its acclaimed skill set in developing large-scale infrastructure and its massive capital investments in the world market meet Nigeria's need for funding and infrastructure development. Accordingly, the needs of both countries have increased trade, and the number of Chinese companies operating in Nigeria has made the latter a large recipient of Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) (Raji & Ogunrinu, 2018). Chinese investments in

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Nigeria are export-oriented and are concentrated in the oil and gas industry, manufacturing and agro-allied industries, construction and telecommunications (Brautigam 2003., Ogunkola, Bankole, & Adewuyi, 2008). Their alternative economic development provides a source of external finance that ensures that Nigeria can develop infrastructure that will improve regional economic integration in the long term (Ehizuelen, 2017., Balasubramanyam 2015).

However, although China and Nigeria have established economic interests incentivised by needs, their relations in recent times have been one of the weighty interests, paradoxical, complex, and characterised by intense scrutiny. On the one hand, China's alternative economic development programs in Nigeria have been widely criticised for contradicting western neo-liberal donor policies. Its resource-backed loans raise fears about economic sustainability, neo-colonial debt traps, and sovereignty loss (Orovwuje, 2020). Moreover, Chinese businesses are accused of poor working conditions and paying low wages to Nigerian workers while exporting low-quality material goods and leaving environmental degradation, corruption and unemployment behind (Broadman, 2007., Egbula & Zheng, 2011). On the other, China is considered good, offering development strategies that ensure and promote infrastructural development for financial stability and knowledge spillovers that will lead Nigeria to a technological revolution through scholarships, exchanges and training opportunities (Chen, 2018., Ehizuelen, 2017., Ogunlesi, 2015). In other words, the Sino-Nigeria relation is neo-colonial, somewhat for economic development, to scholars.

As there are polarising debates about Sino- Nigeria relations, this dissertation attempts to carefully study Nigeria- China relations in the last twenty years, from 2000 to 2020, as neo-colonial or economic development. Concentrating on the established time frame, we intend to overlook evidence fragmented and sometimes contradictory perspectives that portray China's foreign policies as thoroughly demonstrating neo-colonial tendencies. Besides, an attempt to provide a balanced view of Sino- Nigeria relations requires showing that China's interest in Nigeria indeed has something to do with the country's renaissance of rapid economic growth between 2000 and 2020; following a policy shift in Nigeria - China relationship that relied more on soft power by cooperation, instead of hard power and economic sanctions. Hence, the evolution of Sino-Nigeria relations and the increased importance of

establishing an objective discussion of the bilateral cooperation with China as neo-colonialism or a worthy development alliance make the analysis of Sino- Nigeria relations essential as available discuss does not fully portray Nigeria's role in China's international agenda and vice-versa.

This research offers an original contribution to the body of knowledge on the discourse of Sino-Nigeria relations within the context of each administration since 1999. Previous research have discussed specific of relations such as trade. This study provides thematic analysis of key infrastructure under each of the administration since 1999 to 2023. The study also contributes to importance of infrastructure to China's Road and Belt initiative and its benefit to Nigeria.

2. Understanding South-South Cooperation

South-South cooperation as a concept is often contested. Alden, Morphet, & Vieira (2010) (as cited in Seteolu & Oshodi, 2018) explain it as state and non-state actors, which depicts their shared experience of colonialism, imperialism and the subsequent challenge of nation-building and development within an international system dominated by countries of the North. It also refers to a broad framework of collaboration among the South's countries in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and technical domains (UNOSSC,2018). A means for developing countries to share knowledge and resources within formal, informal, bilateral, and inter or intra-regional levels to identify the most effective steps towards eradicating their developmental challenges (Ugwuja, Ubaku, Obiakor, Nwachukwu, & Ibekilo, 2014., UN DESA, 2019). Thus, it is a technical tool for states to collaborate and share knowledge, skills, and successful initiatives that resolve their vulnerability to global issues.

Besides, the concept further refers to a conscious, systematic, and politically motivated system developed to create a structure of multiple links between developing countries as well as a strategy aimed at empowering developing countries to uplift their citizens' quality of life in mutual respect while accepting the specificity and comparative advantage of each country in their ability to influence the development agenda (SEGIB, 2009., PPD, n.d.). In addition, to Carlsson (1982), south-south cooperation assumes capital flow primarily in direct investments from the more prominent and more affluent countries to the small and more

impoverished in the south and trade contacts that concern foodstuffs and raw materials. Therefore, Bergamaschi, Moore & Tickner (2007) summatively posit that:

In common parlance, it can include political, military, economic, or cultural relationships; humanitarian assistance and technical co-operation between developing countries; the allocation of financial resources for development projects and regional integration as well as the constitution of blocks—a common position and agenda in multilateral negotiations. Bergamaschi, Moore & Tickner (2007, p. 1)

The emergence of South-South Cooperation dates back to the Bandung conference of 1955 that sought to enhance further economic and cultural cooperation between developing African and Asian states to achieve their self-reliance. It also dates back to the 1978 Buenos Plan of Action for promoting and implementing technical cooperation among developing countries (The Reality of Aid, 2010., UN DESA, 2019). The dominant mode of relations within the global economy, the North-South system that often reflected lower income levels, resource bases of developing countries as well as the North's control of international economic governance, caused developing countries in the global South to begin seeking an alternative source for the existing economic and political order; and to improve their economic growth and development (Spero & Hart, 2010., UN DESA, 2019).

Thus, in resolving the recalcitrant economic asymmetry between countries of the Global North and South, the emergence of the framework of South-South Cooperation led to the formation of various southern movements and institutions. It led to the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961, the Group of 77 in 1964, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 1964. It also drove the New International Economic Order in 1974, sharing a perception that learning and knowledge exchange between south countries was a better tool to assess and resolve development challenges beyond conventional North-South transfers (Bergamaschi, Moore & Tickner,2007). Countries of the global South sought to de-link themselves from the existing international order at that time that had failed to tackle the legacies of colonialism while forging stronger economic ties among themselves, which they assumed

would be less exploitative and more relevant to their development (Moore, 2012., Gray & Gills, 2016).

Additionally, in recent times, South-South cooperation has fostered a new set of development cooperation actors, south-led development finance institutions, contributing further to the South's development assistance architecture. It fostered the creation of the New Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and Southern-owned development cooperation funds such as Mexico-Chile Joint Cooperation Fund, FAO-China Fund, India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) Fund; and India-U.N. Development Partnership Fund. The establishment of these financial institutions has created alternatives for the existing development cooperation system while enabling developing countries to finance development projects in infrastructure and agriculture, and industry sectors (Onyekwena, & Ekeruche, 2019).

Moreover, discussions on South-South Cooperation have undergone a paradigm shift. It now includes a growing emphasis on China - Africa relations, which necessitates a rethink of South-South development along national or regional lines. It likewise now includes discussions on the rising impact of other members of the BRICS, Brazil, Russia, India, and South Africa; Chile, Turkey, Thailand, Palestine, whose emergence creates a new multipolarity in international development (Mohan & Power, 2009., Onyekwena & Ekeruche, 2019). Within South-South cooperation, the countries have created rising investment and aid sources outside the West while establishing dedicated agencies for international development cooperation. They collaborate on a wide range of science, technology development, education, health, and cultural exchanges with benefits ranging from collective experiences, technology and economic collaboration, common positions in international fora, trilateral cooperation (Chidaushe, 2010). However, their recent economic and diplomatic achievements that have intensified production's globalisation, trade and financial flows have caused increasing debates of benefits and possible failures of their development alternatives to replace the global North's hegemonic and neo-colonial ones (Gray & Gills, 2016).

3. Empirical review on Sino-African Relations

Currently, China is considered Africa's prime economic and development partner. It accounts for increased merchandise trade that has caused it to outpace traditional partners; massive foreign direct investment flows from nearly 900 companies in retail, manufacturing, agricultural and oil sectors, and aid initiatives in the form of economic and technical cooperation (Brautigam, 2009., Busse, Erdogan & Mühlen, 2014). China's interests in Africa also encompass security, diplomacy and soft power issues (Hanauer & Morris, 2014). However, relations between China and Africa have led to many perspectives, analysing Chinese practices' scope, scale, and mode. Its natural resource demands, development assistance model, export of low-cost manufactured goods to African markets has caused extensive debates on Sino- Africa relations to determine if China is a constructive partner or otherwise (Asongu, & Aminkeng, 2013). In line with this, several researchers have published numerous articles addressing Sino-Africa relation issues as exploitative or development partners.

For the most part, few review articles reported empirical research on Sino-African relations as neo-colonial or economic development. However, some researchers have attempted to review the effects of China's activities in Africa by analysing trade, foreign direct investment and aid. For example, Ogunkola, Bankole & Adewuyi (2008) analysed the impact of China–Africa trade relations at the aggregate African and national levels of a selected sample of countries between 2000 and 2008 and found several benefits and costs. The study found trade benefits to be in the form of lower import prices, access to a wide variety of final and intermediate goods, and increased demand for Africa's exports, leading to increased export prices. While on the negative side, Africa manufacturing sectors face intense Chinese competition in domestic and external markets. Competition stems from the existing trading pattern that does not correspond to Africa's longer-term objectives of diversifying economic and trade structures for industrial development. Eiseman (2012) finds that significant market-driven disparities in China's trade with African resource and non-resource producers will continue to generate new political challenges. It also assumes that little can be done to reduce some African countries' dependence on natural resource exports to China or African consumers' preference for low-cost, decent quality Chinese consumer goods. Besides, studying the effects of growing Chinese influence in Africa on intra-regional trade using a Poisson pseudomaximum likelihood estimation method for 135 countries from 1990-2012, Kholsa (2015) attests that African countries that are not oilabundant are marginalised from global trade. Cheap imports from China and China's preferential tariff treatment awarded to exporters in African countries have diverted imports and exports from African countries to China. However, the study observes that Chinese investments and aid packages that have improved infrastructure have partly enabled African countries to trade more; regardless, it concludes that the long term effects of china's influence in Africa do not seem favourable.

With regards foreign direct investment, Ross (2015), in a study to identify and analyse determinants of Chinese outward foreign direct investment (OFDI) in Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia, Ghana, Kenya, Algeria, Egypt and Sudan from 2003 to 2012, found that Chinese investments in African countries are driven by natural resources, factors related to infrastructure quality and the regulatory environment enforced by host governments. Bräutigam, Diao, McMillan, & Silver (2017) conducted an empirical study using official Chinese data to examine the patterns of Chinese engagement in Africa for the period 1998 to 2015 to present a balanced view on what we know about Chinese investment in Africa and found that Chinese investment is smaller, more diverse and more growth-oriented than is often believed. The study suggests that China still accounts for a small but increasing share of Africa's inward FDI stocks and a stagnant share of China's outward FDI stocks. Contrary to the general belief that China invests more in natural resources, it discovers that construction, mining, and manufacturing investments are comparable to other sectors and are not limited to resource-rich countries. It also observes that China is a significant source of Africa's imports and destination for its exports and contributes significantly to Africa's infrastructure necessary for unlocking further investment potential from China and other countries, and leads to both direct and indirect job creation, the majority of which is for local workers.

Lönnqvist (2008), in an overview of China's ODA to Africa for civil society organisations (CSOs), finds that China's aid and commercial presence mirror western countries early post-colonial modernist development efforts found not to work. However, it infers that China's activities may pressure northern donors to make more strenuous efforts to lead by example and give recipient Africa governments autonomy to untie aid and push for sustainability. It nevertheless concludes that China, as an ODA partner for Africa, may have more radical consequences in its knock-on effects on existing aid than its immediate impact on the African continent. On the other hand, Busse, Erdogan, & Mühlen (2014)

investigated the impact of Chinese activities in sub-Saharan African countries concerning economies' growth performance using a Solow-type growth model and panel data from 1991 to 2011 and found no significant growth effects of Chinese aid to Africa.

The study concludes that as Chinese aid has no visible effect on African growth yet, African governments need to leverage the opportunities that arise from China's activities in Africa. Moreover, it suggests that adopting a clear and coherent strategy helps achieve the latter as no matter the source of aid, its effect on economic growth is controversial and depends significantly on how the host country utilises it. Likewise, Isaksson & Kotsadam (2018) conducted a study on Chinese development finance projects to Africa from 2000 to 2012 period with 98,449 respondents from across 29 African countries that indicated that Chinese aid fuels local corruption in host countries, is not distributed evenly within them and have no noticeable impact on local economic activity.

Further, many scholars have offered a generic literature review of Sino-Africa relations, including conceptual and empirical elements. For example, Bbaala (2015) writes an article that attempts to assess whether Africa's economic relations with China are genuinely 'win-win' or 'winlose instead, to arouse a broader and deeper discourse on South-South relations in general. Empirical perspectives in the article revealed that resources had played a key role in Sino-Africa relations. It also suggests that the mid-1950s to the late 1970s, when China actively supported Africa's liberation struggle, reflects the best days of 'win-win' relations between China and Africa. However, the article suggests that the unfolding social, economic, and political order points to a new exploitation pattern. As a southern metropolis, China is competing with the North for the African countries' resources, and the marketing of its manufacture show the emergence of neo-colonialism. Thus, it resolves that the new Sino-Africa economic relations, although still largely 'winwin' at the moment, could soon plunge into 'win-lose relations favouring China. Contrarily, Deych (2019) examines the unique features of China's diplomatic practices on the continent and explores China-Africa trade relations and Beijing's activities as a donor and investor in Africa and observes that it is hard to deny that the Chinese presence in Africa has its drawbacks. However, it finds that China has made a massive contribution to Africa's development difficult to dispute. Hence, it contends that it would be reasonable to regard Beijing's Africa policy not as something dictated by economic and political expediency, which is the standard accusation from the West, but as mutually beneficial – in other words, a win-win strategy.

Conversely, in the recent past, Tukumbi (2011) conducted an empiricallybased analysis and a reflection study using the data and figures from Chinese sectoral investments and export-import of China and specific African countries to critically evaluate these relations to determine if they are qualified to be called neo-imperialist or neo-liberal. As per the research finding, China has not established yet any strong institutional and cultural alliances with the African elite to have a neo-imperialist system. Moreover, Africa did not emulate China's governance model after the Cold war; their trade relations do not portray its whole meaning and impact; no international relations theory thoroughly explains unorthodox China -Africa relations that are not static or fit dual world system (Tukumbi, 2011). Thus, the study suggests that even though China has an instinct to act as a neo-colonialist, available data does not provide tangible evidence supporting the view that China intends to control Africa politically or has a hidden agenda to divide some African territoriality for political gains. Instead, it observes that China intends to exploit African security resources as much as possible and not necessarily exploit cheap African labour. Hence, the article resolves that even though China has increased its role in Africa, it is up to African states to determine how they use the relationship positively and effectively and priorities they can pursue within that would not allow China to dictate what they should do, exploit their relations or destroy its environment and culture. It also proposes that China should not be considered an absolute enemy to Africa and the African people and vice-versa, but an equal partner.

3.1. Nigeria-China Relations

3.1.1. Nigeria – China relations before 1999

For most of its years, Sino- Nigeria relations were tense, of much less relative importance yielding no diplomatic or economic benefits. In the early post-independence years, political relations were sour and bridled by scepticism. Nigeria considered China a non-aligned developing country and feared the spread of communism within its pro-western ideological stance. As a result of fears, Nigeria fostered little to no relationship with China even though the latter had sought Africa's self-reliance through the Bandung conference of 1955. The Chinese premier

Zhou En-lai's paid Nigeria no visit on his African tour in 1963, while Nigeria turned away Chinese delegates seeking diplomatic ties in 1964 (Utomi, 2008., Mthembu-Salter, 2009).

Moreover, the Nigerian Civil War (1967- 1970) and the Cultural Revolution in China (1966 - 1976) worsened further Nigeria- China relations (Jackson, 2019). In 1963, China had an ideological split with the Soviet Union that caused it to support organisations worldwide that opposed both the Soviets and the United States, including small, marginal groups in Africa that opposed colonialism and supported Maoism. Thus, Ogunbadejo (1976) posits that when the Civil War exigencies forced Nigeria to begin relations with Russia, the Sino-Soviet differences transferred to Nigeria, and China supported Biafra. China's support of Biafra was given through a public statement in September 1968, and its covert supply of light arms soured its relations with Nigeria until the end of the civil war in 1970 (Mthembu-Salter, 2009).

At the end of the civil war, Nigeria and China established diplomatic relations in 1971. Both countries signed open-ended agreements on economic and technical cooperation, including a trade agreement that had no impact on the unregulated import of Chinese goods and adverse trade imbalance (Ogunsanwo, 2008). Following diplomatic ties, Nigeria officially supported China's National Government as the genuine, sole representative of the Chinese people (Egbula & Zheng, 2011). The diplomatic recognition of the People's Republic of China (PRC) instead of the Republic of China, Taiwan, led to the PRC replacing Taiwan in the United Nations and its security council. However, the alliance produced little diplomatic and economic benefits in the thirty years that followed due to a series of events.

Despite signing a Joint Communiqué on establishing diplomatic relations, Nigeria still held reservations about China's spread of communism and its search for ideological allies against capitalism and western influence. Thus, it maintained a western-influenced foreign policy stance that fostered no strategic economic relations with China. Besides, Nigeria and China achieved the most negligible economic gains because Nigeria's ruling elites could not diversify its rentier economy that developed around its crude oil mainly sold to the West (Seteolu, & Oshodi, 2017). Moreover, China's role in the Angola conflict through its support of the US-backed Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola, despite its long-

held rhetorical support for anti-imperialist struggles, affected its relations with Nigeria (Adunbi, & Stein, 2019).

Besides, Nigeria's military coups series intensified economic collapse and ever-worsening foreign relations between both countries even though the Abacha regime had looked east following western sanctions and international criticism (Egbula & Zheng, 2011). So, while Nigeria struggled with military rule and Western sanctions, China strived, adopting a varying economic development strategy that enabled reforms and opened its economy to the world. Nevertheless, Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999 provided a historic turning point for China-Nigeria economic relations; revived against the need to rid Nigeria of inadequate infrastructure and lingering western debts (Mthembu-Salter, 2009).

China's recent engagements with Nigeria have primarily reflected its rapidly expanding economic growth, accumulated foreign reserves and trade exchanges. For Nigeria, a significant political ideology change following failed western economic policies and the need to alleviate poverty and expand the economy and trade through infrastructural development. Subsequently, their economic relations became more interdependent as despite having poor initial ties, Nigeria and China have established a strategic partnership of needs. China recognises that Nigeria is a credible player in the international arena, strategic to its resource needs and interest in Africa and the international community of states; Nigeria likewise feels the same. As a result, both countries have shifted their strategy for each other. Nigeria and China's strategy for each other rely on the formation of an alliance exhibited by distinctive characteristics, such as sincere friendship and mutual trust, mutual benefit and joint development, enhanced consultation and mutual support, and commitment to a long-term perspective and a future-oriented relationship (Deng, 2011). In this light, the following chapter provides an overview of Sino Nigeria relations in the last twenty years, starting with the Obasanjo administration, 1999 to 2007, as to various scholars, Nigeria-China relations intensified further in that administration. The different Nigerian presidential administrations of the past twenty years will constitute the chapter's subcategories to understand historic events better.

3.1.2. Obasanjo Administration, 1999 – 2007

In 2000, China - Nigeria relations under the Obasanjo administration took a different, more intense stance based on a strategic partnership driving principle to realise Nigeria's economic prosperity. A strategic stance that coincided with the start of a new Chinese orientation towards Africa that saw a steadily growing wave of outward Chinese investment to Africa through initiatives of the Forum on China Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) (Mthembu-Salter, 2009). Having set aside fears following visits at various levels, in 2001, Nigeria and China signed an agreement on trade, and an agreement on investment Promotion and Protection, which stabilised their economic relations (PRC, n.d., Ogunkola, Bankole & Adewuyi, 2008).

In the following year, 2002, Nigeria and China established the basis for consolidating strong and prosperous bilateral relations. Both countries signed agreements to avoid double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income, consular affairs, cooperation on strengthening management of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and diversion of precursor chemicals, and tourism cooperation (PRC, n.d.). In 2003, China, Nigeria and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) signed an agreement. The latter was due to China's bid to work with Nigeria on food security under a south-south cooperation programme designed to implement activities aimed at safeguarding food security. The programme included water control projects, production systems to boost crops and diversification of production.

In 2006 both countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on a strategic partnership (Riddle, 2002, PRC, n.d.). According to Egbula & Zheng (2011), the need for petroleum, power, telecommunications, and manufacturing sectors was specified as the Chinese's main investment targets at the MOU signing. The MOU was the first for an African country, and its partnership laid the foundation for Obasanjo's economic policy approach towards China (Adunbi & Stein, 2019). Keeping with precedent, as the Obasanjo administration came into office, it initiated a varying economic policy position towards China. It adopted a foreign policy rationale that took into account the effects of China's economic reform policies that birthed impressive economic development and industrial energy and market expansion needs as grounds for furthering Sino-Nigeria relations (Utomi, 2008., Mthembu-Salter, 2009).

Within Obasanjo's approach for China lay the central concept scholars branded oil-for-infrastructure. The Obasanjo administration reasoned that China's development and its energy need provides a strategically favourable position for Nigeria in terms of trade and development, especially infrastructure, and as an alternate source for aid and thus sought the strategy of awarding oil contracts, under favourable terms, to the Chinese government and its subsidiary organisation in exchange for their delivery of essential infrastructure development projects (Mthembu-Salter, 2009., Egbula & Zheng, 2011). Oil-for-infrastructure resulted in the Obasanjo administration ceding significant oil blocs through four bidding rounds to the Chinese to rehabilitate Lagos- Kano railway and transition existing rail routes toward higher-capacity standard-gauge tracks to connect the federation's thirty-six states and economic hubs. Oil blocs were also awarded to the Chinese to construct a massive 2600 MW hydroelectric power station at Mambilla in Taraba state and for investments in downstream and infrastructure projects, including the Kaduna refinery (Wong, 2009., Chen, 2018., Mthembu-Salter, 2009).

3.1.3. Yar'Adua administration, 2007 – 2010

Yar'Adua won the 2007 Nigeria presidential election and resumed office with a rhetorical agenda that placed citizens at the epicentre of its foreign policy considerations while citing concerns about the absence of transparency and due process in the past government and its oil- for-infrastructure approach with the Chinese (Egbula & Zheng, 2011). Soon after taking office, the Yar'Adua administration investigated 2005, 2006 and 2007 bidding rounds that saw the Chinese acquire significant oil blocks. The resulting government report was riddled with criticisms and complaints of irregularities. According to Vines, Wong & Weimer (2009), criticisms regarding Obasanjo's oil- for- infrastructure stemmed from the fact that infrastructure projects linked to Chinese acquisition of oil blocks were not executed because of Nigeria's lack of a formal mechanism to enforce deals and hidden political agendas, allegations of corruption due to inflated costs from hastily awarded contracts deemed not to be in Nigeria's national interests and overall mismanagement.

Subsequently, the Yar'Adua administration cancelled and suspended most of the oil-for-infrastructure contracts. Rehabilitation of the Lagos–Kano railway was placed on hold. The construction of the Mambilla power station and a 950 MW hydroelectric power station in Zungeru was

suspended by the Yar'Adua administration. The second phase of a National Rural Telephony Programme that the Obasanjo administration had begun through a concessionary loan from China was also put on hold (Mthembu-Salter, 2009). However, even though the Yar'Adua administration expressed its dislike of the Obasanjo administrations' oil–for–infrastructure approach, oil had a significant priority in Yar'Adua's foreign policy towards China. In seeking to resolve Nigeria's infrastructure issues in partnership with China, under the guise of strengthening good governance incentives, the Yar'Adua administration adopted oil- for- cash as a new measure.

The administration's inability to carry forward the oil-for-infrastructure deals struck under the Obasanjo regime is attributed to falling global oil prices as the number of barrels negotiated initially in return for investment was worth significantly less. Moreover, financial arrangements within the previous government's approach were likewise not favourable to Nigeria as the Chinese had offered to fund in part the projects under terms that ensured that Nigeria would have had to find the balance for funding projects in a manner that would have imposed a burden over time (Vines, Wong & Weimer, 2009). Thus, the Oil-for-Cash economic policy was considered a better option and entailed that for China to gain access to Nigeria's Oil, it had to buy reserves rather than finance and construct national infrastructure, ensuring that revenues are distributed directly to citizens advancing effective, equitable development (Mthembu-Salter, 2009).

Obasanjo's economic policy and its neither competitively priced nor properly designed projects with inflated contract prices would have encouraged corruption and left Nigeria in debt. Regardless, the Yar' Adua administration's immediate and equally strict policies guided by the rule of law, due process and transparency ensured that little progress was achieved within China - Nigeria economic relations from 2007 to 2010. The Chinese could not provide functioning infrastructure, railways or gas pipelines to serve Nigeria's domestic market even though following a meet at the Group of Eight Summit (G8) in 2007, Yar'Adua and Hu Jintao had hoped for deepened economic and trade links and implementation of railway, hydropower and telecommunications projects while expanding culture, education and science and technology exchanges (FMPRC, 2007).

3.1.4. Jonathan administration, 2010 – 2015

At Yar'Adua's death in 2010, his vice president, Goodluck Jonathan, following elections, took over power, maintaining his predecessor's foreign policy approach towards China; but on varying economic terms. The Jonathan administration expected to develop Nigeria's local economy and adopted a foreign policy thrust embedded within a transformation agenda to address Nigeria's macroeconomics framework and economic direction. Seeking to create jobs, manage public expenditure, enact good governance, facilitate justice judicially, improve legislature, transform education, health, power and transportation sector; improve labour and productivity; improve information and communication technology; and resolve conflicts in the Niger Delta through foreign direct investments (Ituma, 2012). In this line of thought, Jonathan's administration fostered economic relations with China based on its need to attract investment to develop its economic programmes to improve Nigeria's economy.

In 2013, President Jonathan paid a visit to China and signed agreements with the Chinese to further enhance economic relations, trade, and financial investments and deepen cooperation in infrastructure construction, agriculture, energy, aviation and aerospace (Agande, 2013. FMPRC,2014). China's Import-Export Bank and the Nigerian Ministry of Finance signed a lending pact to expand Lagos, Kano, Abuja and Port Harcourt airports as part of a Chinese loan of USD 1.5 billion for Nigeria's infrastructure development (Agubamah, 2014). Likewise, a new agreement on economic and technical cooperation was signed between both countries. The First Bank of Nigeria signed an agreement with China Development Bank to support Nigeria's small and medium enterprises with an on-lending facility of USD 100 million (Mordi, 2013). President Jonathan's visit to China was significant as it undermined Nigeria's growing economic relationship with China; from the Nigerian perspective, closer economic ties became imperative, leading to substantial economic relations with China (Agubamah, 2014).

The Jonathan administration's economic policy approach opened Nigeria to the Chinese business community and made Nigeria the second-highest Chinese foreign direct investment recipient after South Africa. Chinese companies also relocated to Nigeria during this period, with an estimated 208 registered Chinese companies focusing on oil and gas, construction, and telecommunications. (Egbula & Zheng, 2011., Adunbi & Stein,

2019). According to SAIS-CARI (2018) (as cited in Adunbi & Stein, 2019), during the Jonathan administration, Nigeria was also one of the largest recipients of loans from China, having received the fourth-highest amount of loans in Africa and the sixth-highest over the more extended period of 2000- 2015.

3.1.5. Buhari's First administration, 2015 – 2019

In 2015 the Buhari administration took over the government and furthered bilateral relations with China. Looking to deliver on its campaign mandate of Change, it sought technical and trading cooperation with China to benefit both countries for development that led to an invitation to a state visit in 2016 (Vanguard, 2016). Thus, Bello, Dutse, & Othman (2017) assert that on assuming office, Buhari's administration utilising shuttle diplomacy deepened trade, diplomatic and economic relations with China by signing agreements and frameworks designed to enhance Nigeria's infrastructural development and industrial activities as well as technological and scientific cooperation.

Agreements signed between both countries resulted in China granting loans as financial aids to fund Nigeria's budget deficit and road, railway, energy, downstream and mining infrastructure construction bilaterally and through the Forum on China African Cooperation (FOCAC) (Bello, Dutse, & Othman, 2017., Dauda, Adie, & Nwokedi, 2018). Besides, the Buhari administration's declared economic foreign goal to attract and sustain an influx of Chinese FDI into Nigeria ratcheted China's pressure on her to endorse the One-China policy. Endorsing the One-China policy required that Nigeria severed established diplomatic relations with Taiwan to strengthen further, stabilise and sustain profiteering bilateral economic relations within Nigeria-China relations (Cole, 2017).

China's interests in Africa, crucial to its continued economic development, problematises Taiwan's efforts to deepen relations with African countries. Other than its investments and the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), China has offered various African countries assistance packages if they recognised China as the true leader of the Chinese people or ignored Taiwan's efforts to switch recognition (Rich & Vasabjit, 2015). Thus, in January 2017, after Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi's visit, the Buhari Administration asked Taiwan to move its de facto embassy, a trade office, from Abuja to Lagos. It also

asked Taiwan to change its name from Trade Mission of the Republic of China (Taiwan) in Nigeria to the Taipei Trade Office in Nigeria and reduce staff (Taiwan today, 2017., Vanguard, 2017). A decision which Hsu (2017) refers to as Nigeria playing along in China's 'peremptory political scheme.

Taiwan protested the administration's decisions, asking Nigeria to observe its 1990 agreement and the principles of equality and mutual benefits based on reciprocity that let Nigeria operate a Taipei trade office (Taiwan Embassy, 2017). However, Nigeria responded to Taiwan's protest with a crackdown, asking the Trade office director to leave Nigeria under the assumption that it could not guarantee his safety and used military personnel to force staff out of the trade office to seal it off (Yi-hsuan & Chin, 2017). The Buhari administration's crackdown on Taiwan deepened economic ties within Sino-Nigeria relations; Nigeria received a pledge of 40 billion dollars in investments and subsequent financial aids for development.

Moreover, in deepening economic ties within Sino-Nigeria relations, the Buhari administration in 2018 agreed to an RMB 16 billion, an estimated 720 billion Naira currency swap with China. The currency swap in which Nigeria was to inject RMB16 billion and China the Naira equivalent into their financial systems, intended for the Chinese Renminbi Yuan to enhance the country's foreign exchange reserves as an alternative foreign reserve currency to the U.S. dollar and to make trade between both countries less reliant on the latter (CBN, 2018., Onu & Wallace, 2018). By reducing the dominance of the U.S. dollar as a trading currency that was often volatile and scarce, the currency swap ensured that trade and investment between China and Nigeria improved as it significantly reduced the increasing pressure on the U.S. dollar (Banwo & Ighodalo, 2018). Hence, the more accessible the Naira was to Chinese businesses, the more Chinese foreign direct and portfolio investments in Nigeria increased as banks allowed Yuan transactions from foreign and local investors and businesses (Bello, Dutse, &Othman, 2017).

4. Heading 1 (Conclusion)

At the inception, Sino- Nigeria relations were tense, of much less relative importance yielding no diplomatic or economic benefits. In the early postindependence years, political relations were sour and bridled by

scepticism. Nigeria considered China a non-aligned developing country and feared the spread of communism. In 2000, China - Nigeria relations under the Obasanjo administration took a different, more intense stance based on a strategic partnership driving principle to realise Nigeria's economic prosperity. A strategic stance that coincided with the start of a new Chinese orientation towards Africa that saw a steadily growing wave of outward Chinese investment to Africa through initiatives of the Forum on China Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). The oil- for- infrastructure was criticized by Obasanjo's successor; Umar Musa Yar'adua which was a setback for Sino-Nigeria relations. At Yar'Adua's death in 2010, his vice president, Goodluck Jonathan, following elections, took over power. The need to improve the economy Jonathan's administration fostered economic relations with China based on its need to attract investment to develop its economic programmes to improve Nigeria's economy. The Jonathan administration's economic policy approach opened Nigeria to the Chinese business community and made Nigeria the second-highest Chinese foreign direct investment recipient after South Africa. In 2015, the Buhari administration took over the government and furthered bilateral relations with China. Looking to deliver on its campaign mandate of Change, it sought infrastructure and trading cooperation with China to benefit both countries for development that led to an invitation to a state visit to China more than once. The study concludes that China's infrastructure support for Buhari's administration can be seen from the prism of Belt and Road Initiative. China infrasture development since 2015 under Buhari cut across railway projects, road, hydro-power projects among others.

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