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FROM THE EDITOR

It is with great pleasure that we present to you this edition of **Ilorin Journal of History and International Studies** (IJOHIS). We had a plethora of submissions bothering on History and related themes. The papers that were finally selected by the Editorial Board addressed a range of issues that are seminal to our understanding of contemporary society. They also reflect the dynamics of the utility of history in an age of globalization. We thank you fervently for your interest and patronage of IJOHIS.

Dr. S.O. Aghalino
Editor (IJOHIS)

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**SINO-NIGERIAN ECONOMIC RELATIONS UNDER THE
OBASANJO ADMINISTRATION**

Odeh Lemuel Ekedegwa*

Abstract

The last eight years 1999-2007 have tremendously witnessed monumental and developmental changes as regards Sino-Nigerian economic ties, which have grown astronomically. China's achievements of accelerated progress have occasioned her modernization, civilization, global acceptability and dramatic economic growth. Thus, the effects of China's feat have positively and negatively affected the economic relations with Nigeria. The juxtaposition of China-Nigeria relations seems like an exercise in separate categories and lopsidedness or Chinese domination in the bilateral terrain. Therefore, the paper postulates that Sino-Nigerian economic relations anchor on economic alliances and understanding. This informs why former Nigerian president, Olusegun Obasanjo described China's investment in Nigeria as part of the overall reform of the national economy, aimed at giving the nation a fresh economic lease, as well as benefitting from Chinese experience as an emerging Super power.

Introduction

China has a growing economy that is hinged on manufacturing activities. Thus, her primary concern with Nigeria from the late 1990's was in line with her desire to secure access to Nigeria's natural resources to fuel her expanding economy. At this point, Beijing makes very concerted efforts to outbid all other Western businessmen on infrastructural projects, providing soft loans and using political means

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to increase her competitive advantage in acquiring natural resources in Nigeria.¹ Her newly found role as the world's factory of manufacturing goods has created a rapacious craving for a market not only for its cheap goods, but interestingly also for raw materials in Nigeria. One major raw material she needs most is crude oil which Nigeria has in abundance and which has also placed Nigeria in a good stead in the global oil politics and diplomacy.

The need for oil to service her growing economy makes China to become the second largest oil importer behind the USA. Thus, accounting for over 40% of global oil demand in the last four years from 2001- 2004 is a fact. She imports 20% of her oil from Africa, particularly Sudan, Nigeria and Angola.² While, it is a truism that Africa holds an estimated 30% of the world's Crude oil reserves, Nigeria is placed 6th as the largest exporter of these resources in the world. It is against this background that China sought to make an inroad into the Nigerian oil sector. This inroad was aptly responded to by Nigeria who also sought to gain from China's overwhelming and astronomic economic growth. Therefore, it becomes evidently clear that this economic relationship is for the mutual benefit of both parties.

Theoretical framework

Globalization

It is the accelerating trend that is creating greater access and exposure to opportunities, values and products while also increasing world social and environmental destruction. According to Eskor Toyo, globalization is a phase of anti-stagflation, counter-revolutionary, tripartite competition and neo-monopolistic propaganda offensive of imperialism.³

Bilateralism

This includes treaties between two countries, exchanges of ambassadors and state visits. The alternatives to bilateral relations are multilateral relations, which involve many states and unilateralism when one state acts on its own.

Multilateralism

International organizations the world over are tended towards multilateralism in the sense that they work in concert with international bodies as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization. Multilateralism gives the nations working together an advantage over those working singularly, unilaterally.

Economic Inequality

It comprises all disparities in the distribution of economic assets and income. The term typically refers to inequality among individuals and groups within a society, but can also refer to inequality among nations. Economic inequality generally refers to equality of outcome, and is related to the idea of opportunity. It is a contested issue whether economic inequality is a positive or negative phenomenon, both on utilitarian and moral grounds.

Dependency Theory

It states that in order to understand why some societies are developed and others are not, it is important to analyse the relationship between the societies now considered as the developed and the underdeveloped ones, because the condition of the latter cannot be explained in isolation. This theory implies therefore that, it is the condition that is responsible for development in the western societies that is responsible for the underdevelopment of the third world nations. For this theory, the relationship that existed and still exists today was characterized by unequal exchange which is why one society is decapitalized in order to enrich the other.⁴

Marxist Theory

One interesting theory that sheds light on the nature of relationship is the one popularized by that German political theorist Karl Marx, in terms of bourgeois capitalist exploitation of the proletariat. Eskor Toyo explains this in terms of competitive inequality. Competition is unequal in two circumstances; the first is competition in circumstances of inherited inequality in equipment, technology, access to market and so on. The second is when competition becomes exploitative; He reasserts that Marxist theory is

designed to enlarge the living space for imperialism by enlarging the living space for capitalism.⁵

Neo- Colonialism

It depicts imperialism in contemporary terms. As a term, neo-colonialism expresses the notion of widespread intensive colonialism or enslavement. This involves integration in the area of business, services and natural resources to the business operations of expansionary global enslavement. This is evident in the economic superiority operational in the sphere of trade, growing power of transnational cooperation and international spread of trade growing power of transnational co-operation and international finance institutions in these processes.

Eclectic Theory

This involves borrowing relevant ideas from the various theories, and applying same in the analysis of issues. A process of various choice in determining the originality by not following one style or set of ideas but choosing from or using a wide variety.

Post-Modernism Theory

Post Modernism differs from most approaches to learning in two fundamental ways. Firstly, is the fact that rationalism and logic are not too important in attaining knowledge and secondly that knowledge can be contradictory. Because of this contextual nature of knowledge, individuals therefore can hold completely two incongruent views of one subject at the same time.⁶ Post Modernism is related to post industrialism. The industrial era came about as a result of the Newtonian thinking, an era wherein thought and processes were considered in the mechanist terms of efficiency and effectiveness and understood scientifically through the process of reductionism. Today, however the core of each of these theories is the basic concept that what was once only understood within the context of reductionism is now beginning to be understood within the concept of interrelatedness and understanding that things are much more diverse, fluid, illusionary and contested including the reality of the world itself.⁷ The theory therefore challenges the conventional wisdom, routines, static meaning

and axioms of normal signs, thereby exposing knowledge to non – dogmatic forms of thought. The theory hinges arguments upon the assertion that there is not one kind of learner, not one particular goal for learning, not one way in which learning takes place nor one particular environment in which learning occurs.⁸ The Post modernist theory asserts that knowledge is tentative, fragmented, multifaceted and not necessarily rational; knowledge is socially constructed and takes form in the eyes of the knower; knowledge is contextual rather than “out there” waiting to be discovered. This paper therefore is anchored on the post modernist theory to argue out her views and positions viz Sino-Nigeria Economic relations between China and Nigeria during the period of study.

China Nigeria Economic Relations 1999-2007

From the inception of Obasanjo's Administration in May, 1999, it became evidently clear that Nigeria's economic and bilateral relations with China were going to grow from strength to strength. This was against the background of the formation of the Nigeria-China friendship association in 1994. This association began a series of multi-lateral, bilateral and economic intercourse between the People's Republic of China and Nigeria. At the inception of the Obasanjo administration, this relationship became more realistic with trade, investment, banking, technical cooperation and the development of railways, amongst many others. Some of these included the Nigerian Railway Plc, the Nigerian Rail Track Authority (NRTA), Nigerian Rail Engineering Plc., and Nigerian Rail Integrated Board (NRIB) ⁹. All these were geared towards revamping the ailing Nigerian Rail system, which saw the emergence of Chinese Civil Engineering Construction Company (CCECC) to reposition the corporation and put her locomotives, wagons and coaches back on track and also to strengthen over 300 curves of 3,500KM rail track as well as training of no fewer than 600 railway staff. This contract was to cost the government the sum of US\$65Billion¹⁰. On her own part, Nigeria got a concessionary loan of US\$1billion from China. From that period onwards, the socio-economic development between China and Nigeria could be aptly captured in the words of Yinzhu thus;

Cooperation between China and Nigeria has remained tremendous, which has resulted in increasing investment and trade relations between (Them). As at last year (1999), over US\$587Million was recorded in transaction between both countries. This figure is five percent higher than that of the previous year. And seven months into this year (2000), the record of transaction is over US\$380million, which is about the same level with the year before last, which without doubt points to an upward and positive trend in trade or economic relation.¹¹

China also plans to invest in the Nigeria transport sector by offering a grant and expertise for the formulation of a 25-year comprehension railway development plan that includes redesigning of the existing railway tracks and expansion of the lines to new areas across Nigeria. In October 2006, the Nigerian government signed a 2.5Billion US Dollar loan facility with China, a substantial part of which would be used to finance the refurbishment of the railway system. In all, an estimated 7,800 kilometers of standard guage railway network to connect all 36 state capitals and major cities in the country was to be built by concession-holders who then would be responsible for the infrastructure upgrades, expansion and maintenance.¹²

The first phase of the project was estimated at 83 billion naira. The entire railway modernization and expansion project was estimated to cost over \$30 Billion dollars. The contract for the first phase covering 1,215 kilometers of double track standard guage line from the commercial centre, Lagos in the Southwest to Kano in the North, with a branch in Minna and Abuja, was signed on October 30, 2006 in Nigeria with the Chinese. The railway modernization and expansion project when completed would be able to run 36 trains per day from Lagos to Kano and back, and move about 40 million tons of goods per year.¹³

Between the period 1996 to 2001, the trade volume between Nigeria and China grew from US\$178million to US\$1.44Billion in 2001¹⁴. It became glaring that China remained one of Nigeria's top 10 trading partners with the Chinese entrepreneurship demonstrating increasing interest investment in Nigeria as it is captured thus:

China has set up over 30 solely owned companies of joint ventures in Nigeria actively involved in the construction, oil and gas, technology, service and education sectors of the Nigerian economy. Among projects already undertaken or still in progress include the rehabilitation of Nigerian Railway, the sportsmen hostel with Abuja sports Complex and construction of the headquarters of the Nigerian Communication Commission¹⁵

In the educational and cultural sphere, there has been a frequent exchange of cultural troupes and students between Nigeria and China. Currently, the Chinese government has undertaken to sponsor some staff of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka to study *Mandarin* (The Chinese Official orthography) up to both Master's and Doctoral levels¹⁶. In the health sector, Nigerian received a donation of anti-malaria drugs and treated mosquito nets worth over N400million from the Chinese government in 2002.

In technology and power, China participated actively in cooperation with Nigeria in the launch of NigComSat-1,¹⁷ Nigeria and Africa's first communication satellite¹⁸. In the power sector, the China EXIM bank is co-funding 5 thermal stations in Nigeria. (Ughelli, Geregu, Papalanto, Alaoji and Omotosho power plants) through a credit facility that is redeemable in 12 years.¹⁹

Closely following on these is also China's involvement in two new hydro-power plants at Zungeru and Mambila in Northern Nigeria through financial and technical support to Nigeria. Within the aforementioned period, Chinese engineering firms engaged a number of Nigerian professionals. Notable among these Chinese companies is: Huawei Technologies²⁰. In the area of international politics, both countries have tended to rely heavily on each other.

In the words of Chibundu;

China relies on Nigeria for support in the United Nations. Equally well, Nigeria has supported fully the return of Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China. China on her part has been supporting Nigeria in her quest for a permanent seat in the UN.²¹

To this end, Nigeria as a nation is pursuing her admission to the exalted position of a permanent membership of the United Nations, **aptly supported by China. Nigeria on her part** is an arrow head, particularly in the AU and NEPAD as a result of her size and tenacity. Moreover, there are important political alliances developing between China and Nigeria often undercutting historical links with hitherto western partners.

Additional Chinese investments in Nigeria include the Abuja metro line phase 1, 2 and 3, Power Station Plant at Lugbe, Housing Estate and the Tunga Maji automotive village. In agriculture, China hopes to venture into the areas of rice and cassava plantation, agro-research centre and agriculture.²²

In the health sector, China is interested in setting up Malaria Medicine factory and plantation garden, AIDS Medicine research facility, research plantation garden and medical equipment factory. In education, she intends to upgrade facilities, while in commerce, Chinese investments include Lagos International goods wholesale centre and Abuja free trade logistic hub.²³

In another development, Ayuba in his *Comrades or Capitalists: The Changing Nature of Sino-African Relation*²⁴ observes that in 2006 The China National Offshore Oil Acquisition Company (CNOOC) secured its largest ever overseas oil acquisition worth over \$2billion. There has been an increase in China investment in Africa which amounted to about 16% of China's investment out flows, with over 600 Chinese companies operating in 49 African countries in 2005.

In the area of military relationship, Nigeria secured further ties when in the 1980's Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA) sent a powerful delegation to China. Furthermore, in May 1998, the Chief of Naval Staff, Rear Admiral Mike Akhigbe, visited China and in November the same year Lieutenant Gen. Liang Guanglie led a military delegation to Nigeria. Arms deals between both countries were minimal until 2005 when Nigeria spent \$251 million on the purchase of twelve F-7NI and three FT.7NI fighters, the very first time for Chinese combat aircraft to enter the country.²⁵

Jiazheng summarized the gains and hoped that the far reaching decision taken for mutual cooperation in areas of agriculture,

education and culture, trade, investment, banking, transport, power, steel and petroleum resources would be pursued vigorously by Chinese government and the organized private institutions. He was therefore hoping that this trade exhibition would continue to enhance bilateral exchanges so as to promote mutual understanding and cooperation. In summarizing Chinese trade relations with Nigeria, the former Nigerian President, Olusegun Obasanjo described China investment in Nigeria as part of all the overall reform of the national economy aimed at giving the nation a fresh economic lease, as well as benefitting from China's experience as an emerging super power.

An Evaluation of Sino Nigerian Economic Relations under the Obasanjo 1999-2007

Some optimistic economists and other Nigerians tend to believe that the aforementioned economic relationship has been very astronomical. It is also in the opinion of many other analysts that China's goodwill to Nigeria is deliberately calculated at capturing, dominating and controlling the Nigeria economy for the overriding interest of the expanding Chinese economic empire. This argument is centered heavily on the fact that, firstly, the NigComSat-1, Nigerian first satellite attempt, disappeared from the orbit, without any convincing explanation from both the Nigeria and the Chinese governments. Secondly, the Nigerian market has been flooded with many Chinese products which in most cases are of sub-standard quality. Some of these range from simple toys to complex mobile telephone handsets, agricultural implements, drugs, electronic, textile, clothing and shoes²⁶. It is even believed that most of the drugs and electronics in the Nigerian market from China are cloned and branded to service specific market needs in the interest of Chinese entrepreneurship, and of course at the detriment of Nigerian consumers. It is against this backdrop that the Nigerian Drug Regulatory Agency, NAFDAC has been having a running battle with importers of Chinese drugs as aptly captured thus:

Most of Chinese drugs are counterfeit, which are smuggled into the country (Nigeria) by dubious Chinese businessmen in collaboration with some

Nigerians, through all manners of unconventional methods²⁷

The argument above is corroborated by Eskor Toyo, who posits that the Nigerian economic relation with China is an attempt at global exploitation and imperialism. He buttresses further that the current globalization, in terms of relation with China, and SAP logic constitute the post 1970 capitalist and imperialist economic anti-people activities, a camouflage of hostility to welfarism through hostility to the state patriotism and socialism.²⁸ This exploitative tendency of China is lopsided. In addition, economic inequality seems to play a decisive part in the scheme of things. Some scholars such as Adejoh, Toyo and others opine that economic disparities in the distribution of economic assets and income seem to give upper hand to the Chinese over their Nigerian counterparts. This informs why China cannot be challenged even when she imports substandard goods into Nigeria.²⁹

In point of fact, the economic relation between China and Nigeria is premised on moral imperfection and economic imbalance. The opportunities on the part of the Chinese are higher than that of the Nigerians in terms of benefits. Furthermore, the proponents of Dependency theory would agree with the fact that unequal exchange prevails when countries such as China (far technologically advanced) engage in economic relations with. Therefore, theories of globalization do not support this economic tie between Nigeria and China.

Other apprehension is that of the realities of technological transfer and job creation for Nigerian citizens. However, public officials outside the foreign affairs tend to believe that Chinese businesses are more attractive because the development gap is less daunting in comparison with the West. Actual technological transfer and job creation are very low because China imports her own goods, labour and manpower. There is also the complaint that when Nigerians have opportunity to gain employment in Chinese industries, the labour conditions do not meet the Nigerian standard, some of the conditions are "slave-like". This also accounts for neo-colonialism in modern times. Neo-colonialism expresses the notion of widespread intensive colonialism or enslavement. By extension, it describes integration in the aspect of business, services and natural resources to the business

operations of expansionary economies. One of the by-products of this was the September, 2002 fire incidence at a Chinese owned factory in Lagos in which at least 37 Nigerians were killed after a factory foreman reportedly locked the building doors³⁰. Also, there were references to illegal enterprises, criminal activities and the customs officials had to shut down a 'China town' in Lagos because many contraband items were being sold openly. It is interesting to state that this closure which was in the interest of Nigeria and her economy did not last long, as the city's first Lady was put under severe pressure from shoppers (who tended to appreciate cheap Chinese goods, which sometimes are one-third of the current rates) to revoke the closure.³¹ The above example illustrates vividly how Nigerian officials view Chinese engagement, although, they welcome Chinese involvement and see potential for great benefit for Nigeria. They however have serious reservations about some of the negative consequences that have occurred. The beauty of all these is that it has created a healthy debate among public officials and business moguls on how Nigeria's relationship with China could be better managed.

While the Nigerian government tends to welcome the Nigerian policy of aid without strings attached, it has also expressed some concerns that some of the support for grand infrastructural development that were agreed upon have not been implemented.³² This situation has led to Nigerian and Chinese officials trading words on whose bureaucratic bottleneck is responsible for the lack of project implementation. Closely following on the heels of all these is the fact that Chinese officials have been used to lower level of human dignity and individual freedom in China's collectivities tradition. The argument now is that if this situation continues, this tradition could encourage human rights abuses by the Nigerian government. Although, some positive analysts believe that if this societal force is applied appropriately, it might result in shaping a more disciplined society and possibly help to tackle such important problems like corruption in Nigeria. Ultimately however, a consensus is that a middle ground balancing of Western over-involvement or meddlesomeness with Chinese tradition of non interference would best serve Nigerian development interest. Finally, there is an argument of Chinese concern for her own citizens viz-a-viz China's overall

approach to Nigeria.³³ This situation was aptly demonstrated with China's apprehension when some Chinese engineers were kidnapped while helping to set up a Motorcycle assembly plant in Anambra State.³⁴ The official reaction was quite different from the previous tradition in which the wellbeing of Chinese citizens abroad drew little attention. So the question here is this; for how long would the Chinese policy of non-interference last? Nigerian officials are tending to suggest that these kidnappings could affect China's dispositions to investing in such states or on the one hand, pressurize them to get involved in local politics. Proximity to the high risk operating environment of the Niger-Delta was said to be behind a Chinese decision to terminate a major industrial park with Imo State and its relocation it to Ogun State. Although, it later became clear that political pressure from former Nigerian president- Obasanjo, who is from Ogun State, led to the decision to relocate the project, the official Chinese position was that Imo was in a hostile neighbourhood close to the trouble spot of River State in Niger-Delta.³⁵

Many Nigerians believed that Obasanjo government courted the Chinese at the expense of local manufacturers by manipulating tariffs to encourage Chinese imports; and this had led to firstly the closure of many textile industries in Nigeria³⁶. Similarly, the dumping of cheap Chinese products into our local market stifles the competitiveness of domestic production.

Conclusion

For many years, China economic engagement with Nigeria was limited. Relations tended to stay at government to government level consisting of aid grants and development projects. However, over the years, the relationship has greatly expanded into the private sector with investment often directly encouraged by both the Nigerian and the Chinese governments. The Chinese business concerns (either to limit it to the venturing of Hong Kong textile producers and Steel processors) are increasingly being replaced by big commitments and engagements from Chinese financial institutions. The acquisition of Standard Chartered Bank, one of Africa's leading banks, as well as a chunk in IBTC Chartered-bank in Nigeria by one of China's largest banks has significantly raised China's investment profile. It is

therefore hoped that as Chinese banks begin to support Chinese enterprise in Nigeria, the level of business involvement is expected to grow sharply.³⁷

Outreach to local communities has also shifted. Earlier Chinese business engagement into Nigeria featured very limited contact with the local communities, with the exception of customer interface. In the new era, however, Chinese enterprise trading with Nigeria is painting a picture of a brighter future with big Chinese retail marketers increasingly making contact with local Nigerian communities. The Chinese footprint in Nigeria is now much larger and bigger with Nigerians conscious of this economic involvement.

The difference in approach and *modus operandi* between China and the West toward local communities in Nigeria has been radical. However, the argument still seems to be which method Nigerians prefer. China and the West differ significantly in the approach towards Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR). While companies from the West have tended to institutionalize CSR, promoting it as part of a public relations program to win goodwill, Chinese businesses are more eclectic and personal in their approach. Their response to individual distress and community trouble has been known to be impassioned and generous, yet it does not seem to attract particular attention for an approach to corporate social responsibility. It was noted that some Chinese companies and businesses have tried to be more proactive before engaging in high-risk conflict zones such as the Niger-Delta. Chinese consulate officers in Abuja and Lagos stress an experience (different from those of Western firms in the Niger-Delta), where companies would set up farms and help build schools before pursuing business prospects.³⁸

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