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# Nigeria and Sino Bilateral Economic Relation: From Isolationism to Constructive Engagement – A Historical Discourse

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Dr. Paul U. Omeje & Nanyen M. Abene

History and International Relations Department Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki

Email: [omejepaul202@gmail.com](mailto:omejepaul202@gmail.com)

Tel : +23408039178525

History and International Studies University of Jos

Email : [nartmoore@yahoo.com](mailto:nartmoore@yahoo.com)

Tel :23408036189145

## Abstract

*Since the first Afro-Asian Conference of 1955 in Bandung, China has pursued vigorously her ambition of becoming a world power. Basically, Sino –Africa relation seems to have dated several centuries back. Indeed, China understood from the earliest periods the importance of Africa nay Nigeria as a centre for competing with the other two great powers of the United States of America and the Soviet Union. The departure of colonial powers after independence created a vacuum in each of the African states and in particular Nigeria; and there was a struggle between the two superpowers to fill it. Then too, this escalated the Chinese (Sino) impulse and desire to establish her presence in Nigeria, spreading communist ideology and experimenting the concept of proletarian revolution. Although formal economic contact between Nigeria and China dates back to the early years of the former's independence in 1960, the development of economic relations between the two countries have not been encouraging until recently. This is sequel to the legacy of British colonialism and her economic imperialism policy. However, in spite of these impediments toward cordial economic bilateral rapport, China's relations with Nigeria have been most conspicuous, particularly in the past few years. The paper concludes that , despite the policy of economic isolationism that pervaded and characterized the early years of Nigeria –China economic relations, the status quo was later superseded with cordial constructive economic engagement that prevails to this day.*

Keywords: Bilateral, Economic, Nigeria, Relation, Sino.

## Introduction

By 1960, when most African countries gained her political independence, China recognized that Western Imperialism and influence was a threat to the continent of Africa. Subsequently, China provided an alternative trajectory by offering bilateral trade relations that would enhance development in the continent. Indeed, China's offer over the years, eventually snowballed into the Nigeria—China (Sino) Economic cordiality. This diplomatic relationship spreading over forty—five years now, has yielded more benefits to Nigeria than those she had with her conventional Western partners.

Nigeria and China established formal diplomatic ties in February 10, 1970.<sup>1</sup> In retrospect, the very fact of the two countries acknowledging each other and formalizing that with full diplomatic relationship was a triumph of sorts for both of them. This position emerges out of what the year 1971 symbolized as a divided between two historical phases for both Nigeria and China. For Nigeria, 1971 marked the close of the first ten years (1960 –1970) of its existence as an independent state. For China, the year 1971 signified a historical benchmark because for the first time since the beginning of communist rule in 1949, it achieved international recognition by attaining full membership in the United Nations (UN).<sup>2</sup> The basis of every bilateral relationship among sovereign states be it diplomatic, trade etc has always been majorly for mutual reciprocity in the fields of political, diplomatic

and economic advantages. And so, the Nigeria –Sino relations is not an exception.

Hence, Nigeria—Sino relationship grew through limited and intermittent contacts beginning after Nigeria's independence to an increasing complex engagement five decades later.<sup>3</sup> The age-long conventional Nigeria's development partners, Great Britain and the United States of America did little in fostering her development. The policies of the capitalist West in Nigeria and indeed sub-Saharan West Africa resulted in rather negative impact on the economy of the region. The primary vehicle for this anomaly in Nigeria in particular is the faceless and orchestrated Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank introduced in Nigeria in the mid-1980s.<sup>4</sup> Nigeria under the leadership of former military president, General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida was forced to introduce the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) as a viable economic shibboleth in 1986. However, till its decline, SAP recorded no significant benefit for the nation (Nigeria).

The introduction of SAP opened yet another vista, which propelled Nigeria into active economic diplomacy through shuttle diplomacy to explain SAP as a new policy objective that would cure Nigeria's plummeting economy. The campaign of economic diplomacy was carried out under the foreign affairs ministry. Also businessmen in organized private sector were part of the entourage to sale the notion of the attractive climate in Nigeria and to attract investors from known world economic giants such as China.<sup>5</sup> Like most African countries in the 1960s and 1970s, Nigeria saw China as a none-aligned developing country and did little to foster economic relations with her.

However, following Deng Xiaoping's reform policies of the 1970s and 1980s that brought about China's dramatic growth and modernization, industrialization ensued, making inevitable higher energy usage and market expansion. These factors brought China into greater contact with Africa and as such, the relations between these two entities. Consequently, Africa and China began to be looked upon as a possible alternative to that of Africa and the Western world.<sup>6</sup> China's economic reform policies coupled with Nigeria's disappointment from her fruitless relationship with the

West soon began to inform the development of Nigeria—Sino relations and in time China began to infiltrate the Nigerian economy. Nonetheless, what gave impetus to this relationship in a cold war era was the economic sanctions imposed by Western nations on Nigeria during General Sani Abacha military junta administration (1993—1997). Hence, this unfortunate treatment of Nigeria soon saw the radical shift in Nigeria's bi-lateral diplomatic relations from the capitalist West to the communist East.<sup>7</sup>

And so, as the relationship progressed especially in economic sphere, China began to give moral and material support to Nigeria, and in return expected unrestricted access to her vast resources as well as those of other raw materials exported into China. However, their end products were partly imported back to Africa, especially, Nigeria.

### **Globalization and Nigerian Economy**

At the crest of imperialism, one-sixth of the world was rich and powerful; five-sixths were supine, defenseless, needy and gullible. But while the rich one-sixth is still rich, it is on the defensive both politically and economically; the poor five-sixths are still poor and angrily aggressive. In the new dream as an African country and pursue Nigeria's Afro-based and self-interests, the economic diplomacy seem a more pragmatic approach in the infusion of her economic reality. Obviously, the creation of modern African states (Nigeria inclusive) was actualize by forces of international economy dominated by great powers of the world. Consequently, African states became an integral and subordinate units in the world political economy.<sup>8</sup> Thus, Nigeria has her values and interests to protect and project in order to ensure her economic survival in the international system.

In the economic realm trade and investment are the immediate issues of Nigeria's objectives, using the economic diplomacy through the ministry of external affairs is to convince foreign investors that Nigerian investment climate is inviting and safe. Besides, businessmen in organized private sector are made integral part of the Nigerian entourage in order to attract investors from known world economic giants such as Japan, Germany, United States of America, Israel, Canada and China.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, due to the deteriorating economy of Nigeria in the 1980s, the then civilian regime of President Aliyu Shehu Shagari

introduced Nigeria's economic austerity and belt-tightening measures. But the regime of General Ibrahim Babaginda in an effort towards lasting solution to these harsh economic measures, introduced the obnoxious structural adjustment programme (SAP) in response to the emerging demands of globalization.

Globalization is a concept in the principle of liberal ideology that is gaining promiscuous verbiage. Since the collapse of cold war and bipolarism, globalization has taken the centre-stage of international politics. It has become essential tool of analyzing and interpreting the complex world of emerging multipolarity of the global village. It is a process driven by technological advancement for greater inter-penetration and uniformity in a wide range of aspects relating to economic life, safety and environmental standards, information requirements monetary and economic policies. As a logical consequence, globalization promotes integration. Yet, it is a very uneven process, with unequal distribution of benefits and losses; globalization, polarization, wealth concentration and marginalization are linked through the same process.<sup>10</sup> Globalization has the capitalist characteristic of deregulation, new technologies, integrated markets, global interdependence and global flows defined by the core capitalist states and their collaborating economic and financial organizations such as International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank.<sup>11</sup> Also, globalization refers to the "phenomenon of increasing integration of nation-states through economic exchanges, political configurations, technological advancement and cultural influences."<sup>12</sup>

Globalization poses a lot of challenges to the old order of global political and economic arrangements. Hence, in response to the challenges of globalization, Nigeria decided to brace up to the modern realism and since no progress is made by cynics, Nigeria adopted many economic measures. These measures which are vague include the adoption of structural adjustment programme (SAP) earlier mentioned, debt relief programmes and reparation, the Technical Aid Corps Programme, increased effort at economic integration such as Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), African Economic Community or Commission (A.E.C), the African Development Bank (ABD) and relations with Group of 77 and the European Economic Community (EEC).<sup>13</sup>

### **Afro—Sino Relations and Chinese penetration into Africa**

The Afro—Sino relationship dates back to many centuries ago. It is assumed that ancient Chinese empire made contact with the peoples of Africa as early as the second century BC.<sup>14</sup> However, European incursion into the political and economic spaces of Africa would appear to have edged out China. In addition, internal turbulence within China alongside a series of wars with Western nations in the nineteenth century allowed her little room for external engagements far away from home.<sup>15</sup> Thus, Africa—China relationship was not reinvigorated and reinstated until the late 1950s and early 1960s, when European colonies in Africa began to be politically emancipated, their economic dependence on their former colonial masters notwithstanding. In the early year of post-independence Africa, economic exchanges between China and Africa were relatively lower than with Africa and her conventional Western allies, a legacy of strong, long established colonial linkages. Though China's interest was claimed to have been largely centred on the search for ideological allies against capitalism and opposition to Western influence, her attempt to woo African countries during such events like the Bandung conference did not yield much impact.

The most salient factor for the beginning of Africa-China relations was political. For instance, in 1971, Nigeria joined other developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America to support Beijing's twenty-one years' bid to win world recognition as one true government of China.<sup>16</sup> Apparently, as a of this support against American opposition, Peoples Republic of China replaced the Republic of China (Taiwan) in the United Nations Security Council on 25 November 1971. In return, China began to give direct support for the various national liberation movements in Africa.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, on the political plain, China has shown interest in many developments in Africa. China associated herself with liberation struggle in Southern Africa, providing financial and sometimes technical assistance to liberation fighters against the Portuguese and South Africa White regime.<sup>18</sup>

Then too, of significance is the fact that Ghana, the Congo Brazzaville and Tanzania benefitted from the ideas of Chinese instructors who worked in these

countries. In Kenya, China provided financial and moral support for the opposition party and Oginga Odinga. In West Africa, China used Nkrumah's Ghana as a base to give support to some opposition groups in neighbouring countries.<sup>19</sup> Hence, when China successfully conducted a nuclear test and launched herself with military power, it became a tremendous encouragement to the revolutionary people of all countries engaged in struggle and a source of inspiration to many Africans. Immediately, the president of the then Tanganyika (now Tanzania) Mwalimu Julius Nyerere invited China. There he understood the need for a Tanzanian national and international independent army. The Tanzanian people now knew that without their own armed forces, a newly independent country could not be assured of true independence. China entered into a defence agreement and military assistance with African states such as Cameroun, Equatorial Guinea, Mali, Tanzania and Guinea.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, China was a source of pride to the black people.

Beyond military understanding, China and some African states also got clear relations on some economic terms. The Chinese became involved in some infant industries in Tanzania. Chinese financial commitment in the construction of a railway line between Tanzania and Zambia was also impressive. On 5 September 1967, an agreement concluded between China and East African states of Tanzania and Zambia was signed in Peking, the Chinese capital city. The railway was estimated to cost up to 280 million dollars (\$280 million),<sup>21</sup> and expected to take five years to complete beginning from 1970. Apart from the railway line, other noticeable projects handled by the Chinese in Tanzania ranged from Friendship Textile Mill to the multi-purpose Ruvu State Farm as a contribution to improve methods of agricultural production. China's population, industrialization and recent economic boom seem to threaten food production and farmland availability. Thus, in order to feed her over 1.3 billion population, the communist party had to invest in agriculture in Africa from where they hope to import food into China.

### **Nigeria and China (Sino) Economic Relations**

Given that Nigeria is China's major trading partner in Africa, it is imperative to highlight Nigeria-Sino economic relations as a reflection of China's relations with other African nations. Although formal economic

contact between Nigeria and China dates back to the early years of Nigeria's independence, development of economic relations between the two countries was extremely slow. Several reasons most of them a historical nature account for this. The first of these relates to the legacy of British colonialism as it pertains to the structure and direction of Nigeria's external trade. British colonialism not only re-structured the Nigerian economy in the light of demands of British imperialism, but also re-directed Nigeria's external trade towards Western Europe in general and Britain in particular.

Nigerian imports, both to meet consumer demand and to feed the local factory production, were also sourced from Britain and Western Europe.<sup>22</sup> The overall consequence of this was that even after independence, Nigeria's external economic relations were dominated by British and other Western interests. The second factor accounting for the slowness of the development of economic relations between Nigeria and China had to do with the extreme suspicion of communism. The mainstream nationalist politician who held state power in Nigeria after the country attained independence, had been tutored in anti—communism politics by the British colonial administrators.<sup>23</sup> And this had the effect of obstructing any flowering of political, cultural and in particular economic relations.

Besides, China passed through the decade of 1960s under a cloud of suspicion over its radical revolutionary posture. Thus, during the first republic years (1960—1966), there was unease in Nigeria about China's close association with the Pan—Africanist government of President Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana. In Nigeria, the alarm was heightened by the presence of camps in Ghana where Chinese instructors trained dissidents from African states in fine arts of subversion. The Nigerian government felt it was a real target.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, during the civil war years in Nigeria (1967—1970), China was under suspicion that, it was colluding with Tanzania to assist Biafra's secession bid.<sup>25</sup> This perception was strengthened by Tanzania's recognition of Biafra, the state of close relations existing between Tanzania and China; and the impulse that, China could use the civil war to pressurize Nigeria over the non—existence of ties between them. However, the formal establishment of diplomatic ties with effect from 12.00 noon, February 10, 1971 erased or push aside these inconvenient details.

The normalization afforded Nigeria and China the opportunity to eliminate the anomaly of having trade ties, without mutual diplomatic relations. According to the then Federal Ministry of Trade of Nigeria, total trade between the two countries was €2.3 billion pounds in 1969, over €5million pounds by the end of 1970 and €10.3 million pounds in 1971 (all in British pound sterling).<sup>26</sup> Thus, when it came about, the establishment of diplomatic relations in February 1971 was opportune and full of practical purposes for both countries. Nevertheless, equally remarkably, the germane features of future trends were quite discernible even at this starting point. The belief that bilateral relations between the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the People's Republic of China (PRC) have expanded on growing bilateral trade and strategic co—operation seems unfounded. This is so because the history of the two political entities covers many mutual controversial areas. After establishing formal relations, Nigeria and China grew closer as a result of international isolation and Western condemnation of Nigeria military administrations (1970s—1998) and China's lack of acceptable human rights policy. Nigeria, became an important source of oil and petroleum for China's rapidly growing economy. Simultaneously, Nigeria look to China for help in achieving high economic growth and anticipated extensive economic, military and political support from her.<sup>27</sup>

Nigeria's relations with China have been most conspicuous in the past years. In the negotiations between Nigeria and China in November 1988, the two countries signed a new five—year agreement on "Economic , Scientific and Technical Cooperation" in Lagos; and two Draft Protocols on Execution of the Odekpe (Ogbaru Local Government Area of Anambra State) Agricultural Project in the Anambra/Imo Basin Development Authority are(South--east Nigeria), and the Borehole Project in Bauchi State<sup>28</sup> (North-east Nigeria). China also identified with agricultural and water resources related projects in Nigeria. These include the Itoikin rice project in Kwara State (North-central Nigeria) and other states. China leased agricultural lands for the next roughly fifty (50) to hundred (100) years in Kwara, Niger and Delta states of Nigeria amongst others.<sup>29</sup> But speculations have revolved around the fact that if the Chinese own farmlands in Nigeria, Nigeria's food production would decline significantly for the duration of the lease. This

would further undermine Nigeria's economic development and impoverish the populace.

Railway reconstruction is another project that has brought China and Nigeria very close. Nigeria signed a contract with the Chinese Engineering Construction Corporation. There is the general belief that linking many parts of Nigeria with rail-lines would help to solve the problem of transportation in the country. It is particularly believed that the linking of rail-lines to the Ajaokuta Steel Plant in Kogi State (North-central Nigeria), would facilitate the distribution of raw materials and finished products of that to various parts of Nigeria. The economic cordiality between Nigeria and China was well demonstrated in the presidency of both nations. Hence, during the regime of President Olusegun Obasanjo (1999 to 2007), the then Chinese leader, President Hu Jintao, visited Nigeria in 2004 and 2006 respectively; after which both nations signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on establishing a strategic partnership.<sup>30</sup>

The President Yar'adua's administration (2007 to 2011) renewed emphasis on Nigeria's economic diplomacy in order to guarantee financial and economic benefits in Nigeria's relationship with China. Thus, President Yar'adua visited China to provide bilateral economic relations. China is the world fastest growing economy; a country that has demonstrated her will to revive Nigeria's railway with over half a billion dollars, in a contract of \$8.3 billion with the Nigeria federal government to build a 1,315 kilometre railway from Lagos to Kano; the largest international construction project in value ever undertaking by a Chinese company. Apart from the railway projects, Nigeria and Chinese co-operation witnessed the establishment by Chinese investors with Lagos State Government (South-west Nigeria) the Free Trade Zone, the signing of \$1.46billion contract with China Gezhouba Group Corporation (CGGC), to build the 2,600 Megawatt Mambilla—hydropower station,<sup>31</sup> in Sarduana local government area of Taraba State (North-east Nigeria. Nonetheless, in August 2017, the President Muhammadu Buhari regime signed another agreement with China to construct the Manbilla Hydro Power at the cost of \$5.792 billion dollars. The construction is expected to be completed in 72 months or 6years (2023). However, the the Mambilla hydro dam project has become an instrument of politics and promises as it never sees the light of the day nor comes to fruition and

usually ends in rhetorics. The Mambilla hydro dam was initiated in 1982 by the Second Republic regime of Alhaji Alieu Shehu Shagari (1979 to 1983). Basically, Nigeria and China economic bilateral economic relations has been keenly demonstrated by the administration of various Nigerian leaders especially since the inception of democracy in 1999. They include the regimes of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, Umaru Musa Yar'adua, Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari.

Nigeria and China signed a US\$311 million agreement for communication and space programs. Following from this, China helped in the development and launching of Nigeria Communication Satellite (NigComSat-1) in May 2007. This expanded cellular and internet networks beyond Nigeria to neighbouring countries in Central Africa before it got lost in space. In road construction, the Chinese Construction Company (CCC), has constructed several kilometres of roads in Ebonyi and Enugu states (South-east Nigeria), since the commencement of the fourth republic in Nigeria in 1999, worth millions of dollars.

China also provided Nigeria with technical advice. Chinese experts have assisted Nigeria in agricultural projects and the dredging of Calabar River,<sup>33</sup> in Cross River State (South-south Nigeria). However, technological transfer which was also in the diplomatic agreements of the Nigeria—China relationship has tended to be mirage. Indeed, Chinese firms had long been criticized for being 'closed' and not employing local experts. Even when they, the Chinese refuse to expose them to the nitty—gritty of the production and manufacturing business.<sup>34</sup> Most materials used for the production are imported from China and not produced in Nigeria. Also Chinese manufacturing companies in Nigeria rather than manufacturing products, performs minor tasks of assemblage. With this practices, the envisaged transfer of technology would be almost impossible and the technological advancement of Nigeria might remain persistently low, thereby confining Nigeria to the status of a perpetual 'consumer state'.<sup>35</sup> It is on this premise that, Nigeria's 8<sup>th</sup> National Assembly of the Lower House (House of Representatives—2015 to 2019), included amongst its committees, the committee on Nigeria—Sino relation. To minimize the lopsided of Nigeria—China manufacturing process usually in favour of China, the chairman of the committee, Yakubu Yusuf advocated for the manufacturing of some Chinese goods in

Nigeria to be labeled 'made in Nigeria and China', instead of importing all finished goods from China.<sup>36</sup>

In trade, Nigeria and China has encouraged in trade rapports. And in general terms, Nigeria—China Friends Associations has been formed to foster and promote economic relations between Nigeria and China, as well as getting into trade. During the administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo (1999 to 2003), Nigeria signed six different bilateral economic ventures with China during president Obasanjo's visit to China in August 2001.<sup>37</sup> Since the establishment of bilateral relations in 1971 immediately after the Nigeria—Biafra war, at no other time had Nigeria—China trade increased to so much volume as recent years. Indeed, bilateral trade between Nigeria and China grew from US\$384 million in 1998 to US\$3 billion in 2006. The bilateral trade has maintained continuous increase from \$2.18 billion in 2004; \$2.83 billion in 2005 to \$3.13 billion in 2006.<sup>38</sup> Most of this was attributed to the oil sector. In 2005, Nigeria agreed to supply PetrolChina (a Chinese oil firm) with several barrels of oil. And in 2006, China secured four oil drilling licences in Nigeria.

In appreciation, China agreed to invest US\$4 billion in oil and infrastructure development projects in Nigeria in return. Since then, both nations have agreed to a four—point plan to improve bilateral relations. One of the key component of the agreement was to expand trade. Furthermore, China agreed to buy a controlling stake in the Kaduna oil refinery. Nigeria also gave preference to Chinese oil firms for contracts for oil exploration in the Niger Delta and Lake Chad Basin. However, the effect of these investments in Nigeria reveals an uneven balance sheet of investment as there is no corresponding amount of investment in the Chinese by Nigeria. Notwithstanding, Nigeria has become a major market for China's textiles with China still ranking high as the world's leading exporter of textiles. Basically, cotton the major raw material for these textiles is obtained from Nigeria, but China textile exports enjoys comparative advantage of sales in Nigeria at the expense of Nigeria manufactures.<sup>39</sup> This to opinion of some was responsible for the closure of most textile mills in Nigeria and laying off of over 150,000 textile workers over the course of a decade, thereby increasing Nigeria's unemployment level.<sup>40</sup>

And so, in the course of this rapport, Nigeria failed in exporting value added products and commodities to

China while importing massively from China. Thus, China now dominates the Nigerian markets. The nearly 170 million Nigerian population are buying China's cheap and sub—standard electronics machines, textiles, clothing and household tools, most of which were produced by state owned factories in China. The number of Chinese traders in Nigeria has been on the increase ever since the co-operation began and yet, there is no corresponding number of Nigerian traders in China. In fact, if there is ,contracts for the capital projects won by Chinese firms in Nigeria have not been reciprocated in terms of contracts won by Nigerians in China. The unidirectional pattern of Nigeria--Sino investments with the imbalance in favour of China has been worrisome. Indeed, while Chinese investments in Nigeria continue to grow, Nigeria's Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) in China has dwindled to certain degree. On the whole, from the above assertion, it is vivid that the balance sheet of trade in the Nigeria—Sino relation is unbalance. While it is unfavourable to Nigeria, the trade relationship favoured China.

### **Debacles To Nigeria and China Relations**

Thus far, the Nigeria—Sino relations has demonstrated that in spite of its shortcomings and certain negative effects on the Nigerian economy, it has somewhat proven to be an effective and formidable cooperation. Most of the debacles which has impeded the relationship is however, is examined below.

First, most of the policies adopted by Nigerian policy makers do not have the strongest possible impact on Nigeria's long—term economic growth. The policies rarely benefit the majority of the populace. This assessment is vivid in Nigeria—Chinese relations especially in the lands sold to the Chinese people without taking cognizance of the nation's population rapid growth especially in the nearest future.

Second, the issue of quality of products is another impediment for the development of Nigeria—Sino rapport. Nigerian markets are usually flooded with sub-standard Chinese goods, which has become alarming. Consequently, the Standard Organization of Nigeria (SON), the Nigerian government regulatory organ or agency of goods manufactured locally as well as imported products threatened the Chinese that, they would report them to the World Trade Organization (WTO) an organ of the United Nations Organization (UNO), should the proliferation of inferior goods in Nigeria persist. However, the Chinese government

maintained that Nigerian importers often pressure Chinese suppliers to produce low quality products in order to make them affordable for Nigerians, but more importantly for the purposes of profit maximization by the importers.<sup>41</sup>

Third, evidences have indicated that Nigeria is performing poorly despite the high revenue proceeds from the crude oil exports. Various bureaucratic constrains and a lack of strong institutions have led to constrained progress in areas of infrastructure, agriculture and technological transfer. Similarly, widespread corruption has made the transfer of wealth to the lower classes difficult and has shifted Foreign Direct Investment from the non—petroleum sector.<sup>42</sup>

Fourth, like the situation with Western—owned oil companies, the exploration of oil in Nigeria by Chinese companies have often led to environmental pollution and degradation. These has cause local inhabitants in the oil—producing communities to resort to insurgency ,<sup>43</sup> militancy and unprecedented kidnapping in the Niger Delta oil—rich region of Nigeria. All these constitute a debacle or constrains to the growth of China—Nigeria cordiality by rendering the oil—producing areas vulnerable and unsafe.

Fifth, language barriers and cultural differences also constitute problem in the Nigeria—Sino relations. These differences weigh heavily against the transfer of technological skills from Chinese to Nigerian citizens. And because cheap Chinese labour is often used, skills needed for large industrial products are rarely transferred to Nigeria. Besides, most Nigerian businessmen continue to face language and cultural barriers.

Finally, though Nigerian's officials have made China's engagement a priority. The strongest leadership has been observed on the Chinese side. Nigerians in particular, have dictated to the Chinese which development projects they would like to undertake. However, the absence or lack of true and visionary leaders on the Nigerian side who are capable of are capable of articulating and enforcing a long—term development strategy that adequately addresses the needs of majority of Nigerian citizens remains a key challenge. Then too, there is the lack of continuity by governments of Nigeria in development projects. More importantly, Nigeria's rampant and high profile level of corruption has proved to be a serious economic debacle to the Nigeria—Sino economic relations.

### **Conclusion**

After a decade of isolationist policy between Nigeria and China after the former's independence, formal diplomatic ties was established between them. Nigeria and China established diplomatic relations in 1971, and it constituted a triumph for sorts for both countries. Each of them saw the very act of establishing formal ties as an aspect of national self-assertion. The article posits that Nigeria—Sino economic relations comes under the category of the type where one party operates at the general international relations level while the other combines both the broad sweep with specific foreign economic pursuits. Categorically, the paper asserts that in the context of the relations between the two countries, Nigeria simply operates at the general realm while China pursues a clear set of economic foreign policy objectives beyond the preview of uncomplicated diplomatic encounter under international relations. Although Nigeria—Sino economic rapports to certain degree seems lopsided, it has however, altered the *ab initio* isolationism and enclosure to a cordial relations and enhanced economic growth and development of both countries.

Nigeria has great prospect in the economic prosperity of China because not only that both countries are developing countries, they share demographic and economic similarity. Indeed, while China is the world largest populated country, Nigeria is the African largest populated country. Nigeria needs more than anything else Chinese technology for industrialization as a first-step to boost her economic and foreign policy objectives anywhere in the world. The lesson from the Nigeria—Sino rapprochement is that demographic power is nothing if it is not supported with economic power. It is really hoped that this relationship would continue to be stronger, with the increasing mutual understanding between the two countries. On the whole, Nigeria and China need economic cooperation to survive the tension of globalization.

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