

## CHINA-NIGERIA BILATERAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENTS: STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP OR SINO-IMPERIALISM

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### **Abstract**

This paper explores the strategic political and economic partnership between China and Nigeria and matters arising. The paper adopts the Ex-Post-Facto research design for data collection and dependency theory as a theoretical framework of analysis. The bilateral trade and economic relationship between China and Nigeria was premised on a win-win partnership, but the paper found that this is contrary to the reality on ground as there is a persistent trade imbalance in favour of China year-on-year from the inception of the engagement to date. To reverse these trend, the paper recommends among others, a total review of the major elements of the bilateral engagement especially in the area of trade that have shown to be exploitative and one sided.

**Keywords:** Political, Economic, Engagement, Dependency, Trade, Imperialism, Development.

### **Introduction**

Political and economic engagement at the level of nations is meant to serve a purpose. In the history of mankind, it has been noted that such engagements are very beneficial to the parties that enter into them. However, it is also true that while some engagements are fruitful to both parties, another fact remains that one party in an engagement may benefit more than the other party in such a way that results in perpetual exploitation of the other. This was evidence during the European slave trade and the later, years of legitimate trade. The Africans were at the exploitative end in those relationships (Obaro Ikime, 1996:10).

Since 1949, when the People's Republic of China was formed especially during the era of Deng Xiaoping, China articulated an "opening –up" foreign policy. As a result of this foreign policy thrust China began to seek for strategic partners overseas that would strengthen international co-operation as well as participate in the globalization process. It is in pursuit of that foreign policy objective that China and Nigeria assented to a joint communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Political and Economic relations in 1971. Utomi (2008:15) had indicated earlier that China first contact with Nigeria was through routine activities of a Chinese commercial officer in Cairo, Egypt who set up an informal trade links with Nigeria and other African countries in 1957. With the establishment of political relations at the ambassadorial level in 1971, not much progress was recorded at the level of economic engagement due to internal crisis that entangled both countries at that time. According to Kwanashie (2000:45) the diplomatic tie between China and Nigeria produced insignificant economic outcome within its first 30 years because China was undergoing the process of

transformation into an economic power, while Nigeria was facing international isolation as a result of human rights abuses perpetrated by successive military regime from 1970-1998. The increase in the tempo of China-Nigeria economic engagement in recent time according to Utomi (2009:25) is due to market opportunities. While consumers in Nigeria patronize cheap products from China on one hand, Chinese manufacturing companies on the other hand are not only seeking for market for their finished products but also raw materials in the form oil and agricultural inputs for their production activities.

Before the advent of China-Nigeria economic engagement, Europe, USA and Canada dominated trade and investment in the country. Adeolu et al (2010:35) argued that even though these countries have a long history of economic engagement with Nigeria the relationship was exploitative than contributory to Nigeria's quest for development. It is in this light that scholars like Ogunkola (2011) and Utomi (2011) see China-Nigeria economic engagement as a better alternative based on favourable investment conditions, comparative advantage products and market expansion. It is in this regard that Egbula and Zheng (2011:65) noted that. "Nigeria remains one of the investment beneficiary from china. China has become the fastest investor in Nigeria."

Data from Debt Management Office (2017) show that oil and mineral resources account for 98% of inflow. On the other-hand Nigeria's import of Chinese goods is higher against Nigeria's export resulting in trade deficit with China. The above mentioned DMO data also revealed that in 2016 for instance Nigeria's import expenditure from China was about 1.57 trillion naira as compared to 157.5 billion naira receipts from exports to china. Analysis of this data shows that Nigeria imported ten times more than its exports to China. Given this trade pattern, the World Bank (2019) reported that China recorded a USD 3.3billion trade surplus against Nigeria in 2017. It is evident that while China is interested in Nigeria as a source of energy and market for its industrial production activities, Nigeria seeks strategic partnership with China.

## **Methodology**

The objective of this paper includes:

1. To analyze the nature of the political and economic engagement between China and Nigeria.
2. To ascertain if the relationship was anchored on the premise of building a strategic partnership or a manifestation of Chinese imperialism in Nigeria.

Inline-, with these objectives the paper,- adopted the Ex Post Facto research design involving the use of secondary sources of data obtained from archival materials, published books, peer-reviewed scholarly works, academic internet sources, journal, newspapers and official documents. Since the focus of the paper is anchored on international relations perspective, data generated was analyzed via content analysis to answer the following research questions:

1. Is China-Nigeria political and economic engagement an opportunity for developing strategic partnership or Chinese opportunism.
2. Has the China-Nigeria engagement become a tool for Chinese imperialism?
3. Is a China-Nigeria political and economic relation a win-win engagement?

These are critical and central questions the paper seeks to answer in order to present a detailed analysis of China-Nigeria political and economic engagement as well as determine whether the engagement would transform both parties into strategic business and political partners or an avenue for Chinese imperialism.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theory adopted as an analytical framework for this paper is the Dependency Theory. Dependency according to Daniel (1980:65) is a situation in which a country or group of

countries have their economy negatively impacted by the development and economic expansion in another country to which the former is subject. This theory was made popular as a framework of analysis within the context of development and underdevelopment. The theory was a reaction to the modernization theory propounded by classical economist in which they posited that all societies progress through a linear stage of development and that developed economies were once in the stage of underdevelopment in the past. Based on their analysis, they prescribed acceleration of investment, technology transfer, loans with stiff conditionality's and closer integration into the world market as a panacea to help underdeveloped nations out of poverty unto modernization. The proponents of dependency theory among whom are Andre Gunder-Frank, Walter Rodney Samir Amir, Dos Santos and Claude Ake on the contrary argued that underdevelopment in a poor nation is caused by resource flow from that poor nation classified as "periphery" to wealthy states they labelled as "core states". The outflow of such resources from poor nations to the core centers creates wealth in those centers at the expense of the periphery states. It is in this context that Hans Singer and Raul Prebisch cited in Richard (2013:30) observed that terms of trade between developed and underdeveloped countries had overtime deteriorated due to exploitative nature of the economic engagement between the two worlds.

Even though Nigeria and China are seen as two giants, there is a power gap between them. Nigeria's economy is a Third World economy while China's is adjudged to be the second largest and leading economy in the world today (CNN: 2011). Emerging trend and pattern of trade between China and Nigeria tend to suggest that China is attempting to condition Nigeria's development through trade imbalance, huge Chinese loans given seemingly "without conditions", dumping of cheap manufacturing products that are creating closure of local manufacturing companies and jobs losses. This development according to Peter (2013:41) "is sinking Nigeria into an abyss of debt".

### **Conceptual Analysis**

To enhance the analytical thrust of this paper the following key concepts are critically analyzed

#### **Analysis of Concept of Economic Engagement: China-Nigeria**

For scholars, - like Galaju and Tofan (2012:15) the concept of economic engagement and co-operation is inappropriately defined, because it is a complex activity involving industrial, commercial, financial, entrepreneurial and production relationship as well as research and development. Caraiani and Georgescu (2013:6) on the other hand view the concept as a type of international coordinated co-operation in acquiring and sharing in a mutually acceptable manner the financial, material and technological resources of partners. The authors went ahead to categorize the process of economic engagement and cooperation between nations into three namely:

Category I: Economic engagement with colonial partners

Category II: Economic engagement as a means of correcting structural macro-economic imbalance

Category III: Economic engagement within the context of international cooperation.

In his own view, Albu (2015:90) expressed the concept to be a dynamic economic development process anchored in bilateral and multilateral relationship between nations with the primary objective of acquiring superior micro and macro-economic outcomes. From the above categorization it can be said that the existing China-Nigeria economic engagement and cooperation falls within the third

Economic and political engagement between China and Nigeria started formally in 1971 when the two nations signed the Joint Communique on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations. From that date, both economic and political engagement between two nations was

characterized by limited and intermittent contact which has transformed into an expansive business engagement to day (Utomi, 2017:61). Analysis of economic engagement between China and Nigeria within the context of trade from the WTO [2012] data shows that the volume of trade was at low levels from 2000, but due to the rapid growth recorded in crude oil export, China became a net exporter of crude oil from Nigeria by 2007. Trade statistics between Nigeria and China from 2000-2010 is presented in table 1.

**Table 1: China-Nigeria Bilateral Trade Statistics 2000-2010 (USD Million)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>China's Export to Nigeria. (In USD Million)</b>	<b>Nigeria's Export to China. (In USD Million)</b>	<b>Value of Trade Imbalance. In favor of china (In USD Million)</b>
2000	563.9	291.9	271.0
2001	917.2	227.4	689.8
2002	1,047.1	121.3	925.8
2003	1,787.5	71.7	1,715.8
2004	1719.3	462.6	1,256.7
2005	2,305.3	527.1	1,778.2
2006	2,855.7	280.0	2,575.7
2007	3,800.2	537.5	3,262.7
2008	6,758.1	509.9	6,248.2
2009	5,476.0	897.0	4,579.0
2010	6,737.5	962.5	5,775.0

Source: World Trade Organization (2012).

Analysis of data in table 1 indicates that the volume of trade between china and Nigeria recorded 300% growth between 2000-2004 and 600 percent growth by 2010. Another notable point from table 1 is that while the trade volume was recording tremendous growth year-on-year the balance of trade was in favor of China. This is due to the fact that China import from Nigeria- was consistently- lower than its exports year-on-year. Critical analysis of this trade statistics- revealed that the volume of Chinese exports to Nigeria accounted for 93% of the bilateral trade total in 2010. This figure according to Utomi (2017:51) represented 36.4% of total trade volume between China and ECOWAS. This trade imbalance has persisted to a higher level presently. For instance, more recent trade data from South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA, 2018) revealed that in 2016 Nigeria imported goods worth 1.57 trillion naira from China while its exports in the same year was 157.5 billion showing that Nigeria imported ten times more than it exported to China. First quarter Data from the National Bureau of Statistic (NBS, 2022), shows that by year end 2021 the value of trade imbalance had risen to USD 23 billion in favor of China. This persistent trade imbalance lends credence to the call for a re-examination of the structure of tariff and non-tariff barrier militating against Nigeria's export to China and the constraints being encountered by Nigerian business from taking advantage of trade opportunities within the context of China-Nigeria strategic partnership engagement.

### **Concept of Strategic Partnership**

Strategic partnership is a business relationship- between companies or nations. Within the context of business to business (B2B) relationship, the partnership aimed at enhancing business growth as well as cost reduction. Within the context of strategic partnership between nations, the aim is expansion of trade opportunities that are mutually beneficial to the nations involved. The operation of the partnership involves sharing of resources and market to assist all involved to succeed in their economic development. A major nature of strategic partnership apart from enhancing market expansion is the fact that strategic partners are non-competing and share both risks and benefits of the decision taken by both nations.

According to Ogunsanwo (2018:40), the primary goal of strategic partnership is mutually beneficial value- creation through the provision and sharing of market information, services and other resources, which each partner has no access to or could only access through finance exchange. The benefits accruing from the relationship according to Adeolu et al (2019:2) includes, cost reduction, economic growth through market expansion and service functionality. There are in operation six types of strategic partnership which are:

- i. Marketing partnership
- ii. Supply partnership
- iii. Supply chain partnership
- iv. Integration partnership
- v. Technology partnership
- vi. Financial partnership

From the perspective of the Chinese government, the Chinese ambassador to Nigeria was reported in This Day newspaper of 10<sup>th</sup> February 2011 that Nigeria is China's strategic partner in Africa and the political and economic relationship between the giant of Africa and the giant of Asia is anchored on the prism of "Good Brothers", "Good Friends" and "Good Partners". The Ambassador was reported in the above mentioned newspaper that being good strategic partners in economic and trade relations, China in its conduct of aid or trade "give priority to the wellbeing of Nigerians as well as encouraging Chinese companies to increase their investment in Nigeria, promote value addition of exported Nigerian products." (This Day Newspaper'-s, 10-02-2011).

### **Analysis of China-Nigeria Bilateral, Political Engagement**

In its endeavor to be a major player in the globalization process as well as expand its spheres of diplomatic ties, China established political relations with Nigeria on 10<sup>th</sup> February, 1971 even though China's official contact with Nigeria was in 1960 when at the instance of the Nigerian government a Chinese delegation came to partake in the independence celebration [Utomi 2007], The diplomatic relationship started on a rather slow pace but became close when Nigeria acting in cohort with other countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa overcame opposition from Western Europe and America to help People Republic of China (PRC) to secure a permanent membership seat in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). With this development the two nations up scaled their diplomatic relation to an ambassadorial level with the establishment of embassies at each other's capital (Kwanashe, 2015:35), within this period (1971-1993) political events occurring in both countries helped to solidify the diplomatic relationship. In Nigeria for instance, the emergence of totalitarian military regimes and the killing of the Ogoni activists, the Nigerian government came under increasingly international condemnation and isolation from Western Europe and America. On the other hand, the massacre of protesting students at the Tiananmen Square by Chinese government also attracted condemnation and political isolation to China. These political developments drew Nigeria and China closer. Furthermore, during the period 1970-1993, China's political diplomatic strategy in Africa was anchored on search for ideological allies against capitalism

and support for the various national liberation movements [Kwanashie, 2015]. Nigeria though not a frontline state became- the conduit for channeling support from China to the liberation fighters. This interface strengthened the diplomatic relationship between China and Nigeria which resulted in more high level diplomatic visits as well as the driving force behind the increase in the tempo of Chinese trade and investment in Nigeria. Nigerian government invited Chinese investors to take advantage of the thriving cotton production business in Northern Nigeria and this helped shaped the fortunes of the early days of the textile manufacturing industry in Nigeria (Alobo, 2014:25). The warm diplomatic ties coupled with Nigeria's support for "One China, Two systems" policy resulted in the signing of several protocols and bilateral trade, economic, scientific, technical, cultural and educational agreements between 1972-1997 [Ode, 2019]. In addition to the various bilateral agreements and to underline the importance of the political diplomatic engagement, the following high profile state visits were undertaken from both sides. In 1974, General Yakubu Gowon as Head of State visited China. Ten years later, Dr Alex Ekwueme in his capacity as vice president visited China. General Abacha followed suit in 1998. With the return to democratic governance, President Olusegun Obasanjo visited China in 1999, 2001 and 2005. From the Chinese side, Vice Premier Geng Biao visited Nigeria in 1978, Vice Premier Huang Hua in 1981, President Jiang Zemin 2002, and President Hu Jintao 2006. From the above analysis, it is clear that China and Nigeria's political engagement is positive and warm with both sides benefitting even though the scale of balance is more in favor of China than Nigeria.

### **Analysis of the Concept of Bilateralism**

According to Bukarambe (2012:45) most international diplomacy is done bilaterally usually manifested in the following ways:

- I. Treaties between two countries
- II. Exchange of ambassadors
- III. State visits.

On the other spectrum is a multilateral relation which involve international relationship with many states, and when a state acts alone in global diplomatic matters it is referred to as unilateralism. In- International relations literature, there is an on-going debate on the merits of bilateralism versus multilateralism. From the literature, the first rejection of bilateralism came after the First World War when it was discovered that the Pre-war system of bilateral treaties was catalytic that made war inevitable (Bukarambe, 2012:61). This according to the author led to the creation of the multilateral League of Nations.

Arguing in this direction, Alden (2017:68) observed that though high profile global institutions such as United Nations and World Trade Organization among others embrace multilateralism in their operations, most diplomatic activities are carried out on the level of bilateralism. The primary advantage of bilateralism in conducting international relations is many. For instance, bilateralism the author argued has flexibility and ease in the process of conducting diplomatic activities between two nations that is lacking in multilateral system. A major disadvantage of bilateralism is demonstrated when disparities exist between the two nations in power, resources, armament and technology, the stronger nation usually leverage on its position of strength to exploit the weaker side in the bilateral diplomatic relationship (Bukarambe, 2012:80). The argument in the literature is that weaker nations stand to benefit more in multilateral diplomatic systems that are not only driven by consensus but where the rule of one state-one-vote applies. From the above analysis, it is clear that considering the economic and technological disparities between China and Nigeria, the political diplomatic relationship at the bilateral level seems to favor Nigeria more.

### **Analysis of the Concept of Imperialism**

Conceptually, the term imperialism is a derivative from Karl Marx (1818-1883) writings. More specifically his critique of capitalism as a stage in the process of a society's socio-economic development. The application of the concept of imperialism within the context of Africa's socio-economic theory is attributed to Kwame Nkrumah who used it in his address to African leaders of the Organization of African States (OAU) in 1963 as well as the title of his 1965 classical book: "Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism." The essence of imperialism according to Nkrumah (1965:7) is that while a nation state under an imperialist control, put up an appearance of political independence and in control over its economic affairs, on the surface, the realities on ground are that the nations both economic and political decisions are controlled by influences, from outside. In such a situation, the leaders of such independent states become minions subject to the whims and caprices of the imperial power or manipulations from their multinational companies.

According to Parenti (2011:35), through the acceptance of loans under the guise of developmental aid, economic support or technological and scientific assistance imperialist powers entrenched hegemonic political and economic control over the nation state. From the foregoing statement, it can be seen that imperialism is a situation where a country achieves political control over another directly through the imposition of sovereignty or economic control via the provision of consolidated finance capital in the forms of aids loans for economic and infrastructural development (Parenti 2011:13).

In tracing the history of imperialism, Parenti noted that it first took place when Great Britain made Ireland its colony in what was known as the British Empire which extended to North America, Asia, Latin America and nation states in Africa including Nigeria (Parenti, 2011:17). Unlike colonialism in which settlement in the oversea territory is key, the modus operandi of imperialism shows that the imperial power can take over a country without significant physical presence. Imperialism is majorly exercised through economic or monetary means. Arguing in this direction, Ngugi Wa Thiongo (1986:12) asserted that imperialism is imposed indirectly through the activities and operations of multinational corporations or directly through luring of nations with fragile economies to accept loans and economic aids with unlimited conditions. Ngugi argued further that the nation and its people that take such loans or economic aids are perpetually saddled with debt servicing on a chronic scale and their livelihood mortgaged to poverty. Another negative impact of imperialism highlighted by Ngugi Wa Thiongo (1986:20) is its effect on culture and language. Wa Thiongo asserted that imperialism not only hurt but estrange native people from their cultural heritage and identity as well as hold them captive through language imposition. In this way those under the influence and power of imperialism are force to embrace the imperialist alien culture, language and way of life and are removed from their indigenous heritage and identity. For instance, English is the official language of people in countries under British Colonial Empire including Nigeria and French is an official language for those countries under French colonial domination. In his contribution, Attah (2013:76) noted that the overdependence on foreign aids and loans as well as the high profile activities of Multinational Corporation in the economies of African nations today is an indication, that 21<sup>st</sup> century Africa is still under economic exploitation and imperialist domination. Within this analytical context, it is clear that the increasing Chinese interest in Nigeria and the high volume of loans given to Nigerian government for infrastructure and other economic developmental activities were done primarily for the benefits and growth of Chinese companies and economy rather that capital injection to stimulate economic growth nor to increase capacity of the local Nigerian manufacturing industries.

### **Critical Analysis of China-Nigerian Political and Economic Engagement**

On the political/diplomatic flank, China-Nigeria's engagement started on a note of modesty and measured encounters. This may be attributed to physical distance between China and Nigeria as well as the political and ideological differences. In spite of these characteristic features of the political engagement is the fact that the two countries do not apply politics and ideology in their mutual relationship, in the way the Western European and American countries do with other countries (Bukari, 2013:17). China leveraged on her diplomatic engagement with Nigeria in cohort with other African nations to win her 21 years battles for global recognition and tip the scale against Taiwan to become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (Hin, 1971,Alobo, 2014:19].

On the economic flank the tempo of China-Nigeria's economic engagement received a boost during the regime of General Sani Abacha (1993-1998) due to the pariah status imposed on Nigeria by the West and America as a result of Human Rights abuse. Nigerian government embraced the China-Nigeria economic engagement as an alternative business model with comparative advantage (Ogunkola, 2017:10). This comparative advantage according to Utomi (2011:20) resulted in a surge in Direct Foreign Investment (FDI) from China and a 300% increase in trade size between the countries. A fall out of this development is the establishment of Nigeria Trade Office in China as well as China Investment Development and Trade Promotion Center in Nigeria in 2006 (Udeala, 2010:5). Udeala noted further that between 2000 and-2010, China-Nigeria's trade volume increased from less than USD 2billion to USD 18billion fueled primarily by demand for oil and involvement in manufacturing and ICT by both Chinese public and private companies. According to Chen et al (2016:55), 518 Chinese companies are presently doing business in Nigeria with 92 registered with Nigerian Investment Promotion Council (NIPC) out of which 30 are involved in manufacturing activities. These companies consist of small medium scale and multi-national firms. For example, Hasham corporation with USD 6million investment and operating in the shoe making industry. Huawei Company with over USD 16billion investment and doing business in the telecommunication industry. Smaller Chinese companies are doing business in restaurant, electronics and appliances in the popular "China Towns" scattered all over Nigerian major cities and state capitals. One area Chinese investments have impacted Nigerian economy positively is in the agricultural sector especially in cotton production. Data from UNCTAD (2006) revealed that cotton production in Northern Nigeria increased from 2.2% to 20% between 1994 and-2002. This increase in cotton production resulted in 10% jump in cotton export from Nigeria to China. Other exports crops impacted by Chinese investment in agriculture include ginger, cassava, silk and yam (Bello, 2017:23).

Chinese investment is currently having a major positive impact on the infrastructural sector of the Nigerian economy. Specifically, Chinese companies have been involved in the construction of Hydro-dams and thermal stations across the country, construction of road networks, upgrade of railway tracks to standard gauge and rehabilitation of airports among others. According to Wang (2017:8) these construction projects are fully or partially funded by the Chinese government. These investments in critical infrastructure are expected to create economic growth, opportunity for technology transfer in-line with Nigerian local content regulations. In spite of the numerous benefits of Chinese investments on the Nigerian economy, these benefits come with a high price. In the first instance, as table 1 (page 5) indicates, the balance of trade has consistently favoured China year-on-year from 2000 to date. While china exports manufactured products to Nigeria which are in trillions of US dollars, Nigeria exports oil and primary products to China which are in billions of US dollars. According to Sanusi (2017:15) between 2013-2016 alone, China's exports of secondary products to Nigeria were 7.8 times more than Nigeria's export of primary products. Another negative impact of Chinese investment on Nigerian economy as the Economist (May, 2018:30) reported is the effect of Chinese companies' operation in Nigeria on job losses and closure of local manufacturing

companies and markets. The Economist highlighted the fact that most Chinese companies operating in Nigeria use Chinese equipment, experts, technology and labor rather than local workers so there is no transfer of skill or technology to Nigerians. As a result of the inability of Nigerian companies to compete with Chinese companies due to illegal and massive dumping of cheap substandard products on the market, 350,000 Nigerian manufacturing jobs mainly in the textile sector have been lost and closure of over 518 Nigerian companies (John 2016:14). Other illegal activities of Chinese companies are their involvement in illegal mining activities. Even when the companies involved are apprehended they usually escape the imposition of full legal sanctions. Confirming this development, Zweig and Jianhai (2015:10) noted that Chinese companies in Nigeria through their unethical business conduct do not contribute to either increase in the local employment rate or growth of the local economy. Data from South African Institute of International Affairs (2020:61) shows that Chinese loans and investment in Nigeria currently at over USD 18 billion an amount which economic scholars and political commentators view as a potential debt trap and a mortgaging of Nigerian's future into the clutches of the Chinese (Daniel, 2020:70). Chinese companies leveraging on trade concessions secured from Nigerian government to monopolize the supply of aluminum and steel products to Nigeria with negative impact on Ajaokuta steel company. More-over, Chinese companies with the tacit support of corrupt immigration and custom officers evade tax payment and secured illegal expatriate quotas (Sanusi, 2013:19).

## **Conclusion**

China and Nigeria's political and economic engagement was anchored on strategic partnership. The underpinning principle of such relationship is premised on a win-win situation. In reality as table 1 indicates, the balance of trade has consistently been in favour of China due to its high volume of exports of substandard manufactured products to Nigeria in contrast to its low level of imports of raw materials from Nigeria. From the Nigerian government perspective-, the essence of entering into a strategic partnership with China is to increase both manufacturing and other economic capacities. The prevailing indices tend to suggest that the political and economic engagement between China and Nigeria is being driven solely by China's need for raw materials and petro energy. This paper is in agreement with those scholars (Sanusi, 2013, Taylor 2012 and Gaye, 2017) that view China's dominance of Nigeria's micro and macro business environment as Chinese imperialism camouflaged as strategic partnership. These scholars such as Taylor argued that China through the high volume of loans given to Nigeria and the high profile dominance of Chinese companies- In the critical sector of Nigerian economy China is seeking to overwhelm Nigeria's economy and strangulate economic growth (Taylor, 2012:35) \For Gaye (2017:16,) the closed activities of Chinese company's operations, dumping of sub-standard products on the Nigerian markets, illegal import duty/tax waivers, increased expatriate quotas, monopoly status in the importation of aluminum and steel product impacted negatively on Nigerian economy. This is in addition, to the issue of huge Chinese loans which the dash board from Nigerian Debt Management Office (DMO, 2021) indicated a debt profile of USD 18 billion without any commensurate performance milestones on ground. It is in this regard that the paper disagrees with Odeh's [2019] conclusion that the China- Nigerian strategic partnership- is a win –win engagement .This paper within the context of the foregoing analysts submit that instead of being a strategic partner in a win-win economic engagement China has become a significant contributor to Nigeria's de-industrialization and underdevelopment. This trend if left unchecked will eventually open the pathway for Sino-imperialism in Nigeria as China will in the event of debt payment failure condition the development process in Nigeria as postulated by the dependency theorist.

## **Recommendation**

In line with the objectives of this paper, the following recommendations are suggested in order to correct the current narrative that China-Nigeria political and economic engagement is a “win-win” strategic partnership:

1. Nigeria should review the major elements that underpins the bilateral economic contract especially in the area of trade that has proven to be exploitative and one sided.
2. The persistent and chronic unfavourable trade imbalance recorded against Nigeria must be reversed by the Nigerian government, taking concrete steps to scale up the pace of industrialization while the citizens must change her paradigm from patronizing sub-standard Chinese manufactured and other foreign products to those made in Nigeria.
3. Nigerian government should explore and exploit the bilateral trade agreement with China by demanding that China demonstrate in clear practical terms that Nigeria is a strategic economic partner by providing technical assistance and technological transfer that will enhance the manufacturing skills and productive capacity of the local industry not only to make it globally competitiveness but also enhance sustainable economic growth as value added.

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