

**FOREIGN AID AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR NIGERIA-CHINA ECONOMIC
RELATIONS.**

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ABSTRACT

The maintenance of economic relations is perceived as one of the measures that might enhance economic development of underdeveloped countries. The study focused on the relationship between Nigeria and China specifically in the area of foreign aid. The study employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, while data were gathered from primary and secondary (SAIS China Africa Research Initiative (SAIS-CARI) data) sources. A total number of 263 respondents was obtained using the survey monkey calculator from six (6) study areas. Findings from the study revealed that though Nigeria stands to benefit from her relationship with China, however foreign aids (Loans) will be more productive if Nigeria has a good policy environment (implying low inflation, low budget deficit, and no protectionism). This implies that making aid more systematically conditional on the quality of policies would likely increase its impact on developing country growth. The study recommends the need to discourage leaders on constant borrowing and reliance on foreign aid, because it only leads to dependency and breeds corruption due to absence of good policies and accountability. While good governance and transparent leaders to channel its appropriate use.

Keywords: Relations, Globalization, Foreign Aids, Development and Underdevelopment

INTRODUCTION

The promotion of all forms of interactions between sovereign states across the globe for varied strategic reasons is within the wider scope of international relations. Agreements reached are usually contained in bilateral and/or multi-lateral treaties between nations which are enabled through cooperation between institutions and persons at administrative and political level as well as in the private sector, academia and civil society of the countries concerned. The role of globalization in fostering relations between countries has been well documented in the literature. A phase of globalization tagged “Modern globalization” described by Ageron (2004) as a more forceful flow of commodities, material and human resources, technology, information and ideas across borders has resulted to a greater integration of economics and societies. The deepening of globalization and its processes can be seen to be critical in shaping foreign or international relations policies.

It is becoming increasingly necessary for countries especially with weaker bargaining power to reflect global realities in the formation of their foreign relations frameworks. More formally, there is the increasing need for countries’ foreign policies to be flexible to accommodate emerging issues such as accelerated continental and global peace and development, green planet initiative among others. In any case, states are considered to be altruistic in the design or proposal of terms for bilateral relations which are usually constructed by high-level decision-making processes of a state (Olumide, 2006). Such national interests are accomplished either through mutual cooperation from partners or exploiting their disadvantaged bargaining positions. There is the growing influence of China presence in Africa especially through the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). Over Fifty countries in the continent have established diplomatic ties with China with the recent being South-Sudan in 2011. Strategically, the defeat U.S obstructionism by China following its return to the United Nations in 1971 was made possible by the massive support from twenty-six African countries and this invigorated the development of Sino-Africa cooperation (Chibundu, 1998). Nigeria's external relations are not limited to China alone (it cut across

Africa, Scandinavian countries, Europe and America), the paper focuses on the Nigeria-China relations.

The China-Nigeria relations have dominated political and economic discourse at academia, business, trade and industrial flora. This is in view of the rising influence of China not only on Nigeria but the continent at large. Nigeria's external relations with China include but not limited to Agriculture, finance (loans/grants), trade, infrastructure and education. The extent of such influence in the determination of Nigeria's independence is needful for policy. The paper interrogates the way and manner in which Nigeria's relations with China has been operating. It is critical to examine areas of lop-sidedness of the relations between the two countries as a fundamental guiding principle if all bilateral deals are "mutual benefits". A holistic view of loans and investment perspectives amongst others is required to expose both the short-and-long run impacts of the strategic relationship to Nigeria. This is needful in addressing the inherent domestic challenges bedeviling Nigeria which is seen to be short-changed in most bilateral dealing with especially developed countries. The above provides a backdrop against which this study is carried out.

Conceptual Framework

Development and Underdevelopment

Partnership amongst nations finds expression in mutual agreement. Here, nation states agree, cooperate, interact and in most cases compromise certain ideological differences in order to gain specific socio-economic advantages. As has been the case from time when China become industrial giant after the revolutions of the 1950's, the degree of intercourse between the latter and other African nations has been those of industrialization and industrial expansion. To this end, the economies of African states have been over whelmed by the quest for expansion by the Chinese artisans ranging from construction industries, electronics, aeronautics, information and communications Technology, textiles, accessories, beverages and fast food. It then follows logically that instead of attracting the right kind of development to Africa

(Nigeria inclusive), industrial relations and expansion has been more of a huge problem than success.

The concept of development can be conceived in its multi-dimensional character. It stands for a set of properties that refer to economic, political or social aspects of life and theories about development may focus on these varying characterizations. However, from the standpoint of this study, development in human society is not only viewed as a many-sided process- in its holistic manner, but more importantly understood within the context of social relations of production (Chidozie and Eniayekan, 2013). To most scholars such as Rodney (1972) argue that even though some of the western or eastern countries claim to have been developed, the sphere of development parse can be country –specific. What therefore is development in a particular place is correspondingly underdevelopment in another place. This is why Rodney then argued further that development should rather be conceptualized as a means of comparing levels of development. The basis of this philosophy is very much tied to the fact that development, at whatever level of analysis has been uneven (though contestable), humans, and indeed social entities with their environmental peculiarities have developed differently at their own pace. Though this view by Rodney has been criticized, the criticism is basically on the basis that Rodney seem to be coming from a narrow perspective when we talk about African development concerns. To a large extent, this researcher is of the view that Rodney was simply been biased in his assessment of the African socio-economic quagmire. The fact is that the leadership etiquettes imbued in some of the world leaders to want to transform their economies are barely absent in third world countries (though with exception of few countries). In the context of globalization and globalism, Africa has literally refused to key into broader development principles of the outside world, which is why the continent is what it is today – highly underdeveloped and impoverished.

Foreign Aid

Foreign aid finds expression in the kind of developmental activities embarked upon by colonial powers in order to oversee their territories during the period of colonization. It should

be recalled that many of these European countries such as Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy and Portugal all had their vested interests in African territories specifically for the purpose of economic exploitation. Thus, the kind of assistance at this level was meant to facilitate the exploitative tendencies of the imperialists. It is in the light of the supposed lopsided benefit of development assistance on the part of the colonialist much to the disadvantage of the colonized people that prompted Ayittey (2005) and Mazrui (2010) to argue that the nature of development assistance where colonial powers built critical infrastructures such as roads, bridges, water ways, ports, harbours, schools, among others. Some of these developmental projects were said to have been premised on the selfish interest of the colonial masters.

Taking the debate further, Ayittey and Mazrui have concurred that such actions carried out by the colonial masters “were driven primarily by the ‘occupying powers’ economic and political interests, including gaining access to raw material resources for their metropolitan industries. It also includes opening up of local markets for their products while vigorously assuming strong control of strategic locations along vital trade routes. However, since the turn of events, especially after the World War II, official development assistance has taken a center stage in world politics. Some of these development assistances have been in the general interest of Europe to revitalize devastated economies that had suffered the impacts of war. The idea was basically to reconstruct affected regions or countries, most especially African economies specifically, and several Asians nations of the world.

Method

Data

The SAIS China Africa Research Initiative (SAIS-CARI) data catalogue was immensely utilized in the extraction of secondary data to address questions raised. The SAIS-CARI was launched in 2014 and is based at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies in Washington D.C. The data are evidence based and generated through high quality data collection. It has been cited repeatedly in high impact international journals.

Data on Chinese Agricultural Investments in Africa, Chinese investment in Africa, China imports and Export from Africa, Chinese loans to Africa, Chinese Contracts in Africa, Chinese workers in Africa and Chinese Foreign aid covering a period of 1990 to 2018. Both primary and secondary sources of data collection were employed. The major strength of using the survey method lies in its scientific design in eliciting first-hand information that could be generalized and enhances external validity of findings. The sampling frame of the study comprised of respondents from; (i) Chinese Embassy, (ii) Ministry of Foreign Affairs (iii) Federal Ministry of Industry, trade and investment (iv) Centre for China Studies (CCS) Abuja (v) Federal Ministry of Science and Technology (vi) National Agency for Food Drug Administration Control (NAFDAC). This target population is chosen because they are stakeholders in policy-programme, supervision and implementation of Agreements in Nigeria-China's bilateral relations. Using the survey monkey online calculator in the spirit of Roztocki (2001), at 95 percent confidence interval and 10 percent margin of error, from a population size of 480, a sample size of 263 was obtained. See URL (<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/mp/sample-size-calculator/>).

Findings

Aside the gains from trade, there are usually fringe benefits associated with relating with developed economies in the form of aids. The study confirms if such aids has been received commensurate to the nature of trading relations between the two countries. It is also important to ascertain if the aids are directed appropriately to the designated areas of needs. Outcomes of the above investigations as well as others are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Partnership outcomes on Nigeria's Economic Development

Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	disagree
Nigeria has enjoyed economic relationship with China and benefited from Chinese foreign aids	35 (16.75)	174 (83.25)	-	-
Foreign aid from Chinese government is mostly cash	126 (60.28)	-	83 (39.71)	-
Foreign aid from Chinese government is usually delivered through infrastructure	52 (24.88)	31 (14.83)	126 (60.28)	
The foreign aid is targeted at addressing infrastructure decay		83 (39.71)	109 (52.15)	17 (8.13)
The foreign aid is targeted at addressing unemployment and poverty reduction	-	-	122 (58.37)	87 (41.62)
Increased foreign aid will increase the capacity of Nigeria government to set her own strategies for development	16 (7.65)	23 (11.00)	116 (55.50)	54 (25.84)
Chinese foreign aid is usually accompanied by inappropriate policies	-	129 (61.72)	34 (16.27)	46 (22.00)
Foreign aid received by Nigerian government has been utilized effectively	-	-	154 (73.68)	55 (26.32)
Economic relation with China has delivered increased trade/investment, telecommunication infrastructure improvement, manpower training.	50 (23.92)	159 (76.07)	-	-
Sino-Nigeria economic relations has promoted technological advancement, industrialization and agricultural modernization in Nigeria	40 (19.14)	- -	140 (66.99)	29 (13.87)

Source: Field Survey, 2017. **Note:** Figures in parenthesis are in percentages

It was agreed overwhelmingly (100 percent) that China is assisting Nigeria with foreign aids. Whether the aids are in monetary form or not is difficult to establish as opinions are divided amongst respondents with greater proportion (about 60 percent) consenting those aids receive

are majorly in monetary form. This is critical in determining the “performance” of aids. Aids in monetary terms are very fungible. It is common practice to divert “liquid” aids to other “pressing” issues in developing countries. With respect to the aids receive from China, respondents are strongly (about 100 percent) of the view that diversion of such aids do occur as indicated by “lack of utilization of aids by government”.

In addition, while aids from China were discovered not to be directed towards addressing the problems of unemployment/poverty reduction (agreed by all respondents), about 40 percent of the respondents maintain that it is channeled to the resuscitation of decaying infrastructure. The percentage increased significantly (almost 100 percent) when respondents were asked if there has been improvement in telecommunication infrastructure as well as man-power training due to the tie between the two countries.

The above view was countered by a respondent in one of the study areas that:

There are host of projects in agriculture that is meant to provide employment to the teaming unemployed youths in the country. This include; The Omal Poultry and feeds company in Kaduna, the Kabe Lagos Rice firm and the Green Agricultural West Africa Ltd (GAWA) located in Warra Kebbi State Nigeria which was initiated by China Geo-engineering Construction overseas Corporation. It obtained 2025 hectares of land on a 99 - year lease from the Kebbi State in 2006. Also, GAWA have obtained a 54ha land near Abuja to build an agricultural industrial park to demonstrate hybrid rice and maize developed with Chinese technologies, experiment ecological farming and show case agricultural processing machinery from China is worthy of mention (Field survey, 2017).

Given the unbalanced trade relations, the hypothesis that foreign aids could correct such deficit and reposition the economy on the path of growth to become competitive was rejected by many of the respondents (approximately 80 percent).

An important finding from this sub-section entails the conditionality's of trading relations especially between a highly industrialized economy on the one hand and a traditional agrarian economy on the other. Though no respondent strongly accepted the notion that some conditions are not favourable to the weaker country, majority (61 percent) of the respondents

agree to the above notion. It is expected that national patriotism would play out and can be used to explain away the proportion that strongly disagree. *To the extent, the superior advantage of an industrialized nation, impacts on the shaping of bilateral terms with a developing nation is worthy of future research.* The debate in literature, though unresolved, whether foreign aid is harmful found expression in the question asked about the role of aids in assisting developing countries set their own strategy for development (row 6, Table 1). The proposition that foreign aid/loan perpetuates dependency was upheld strongly by most (55 percent) of the respondents and a further 25 percent disagree less.

Speaking on foreign aid with Mr. Charles, N.A, a Desk officer in the Asia Pacific Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he opined that;

It is unfortunate that monies received in forms of aids, grants and loans have not been used effectively for the good of the nation yet leaders have remained unrepentant by seeking to get more from these advanced nations who continue to promote and ensure our dependency on them by giving the more funds (Report from survey work, 2017).

It is common to argue that continuous borrowing or receiving foreign aid will lead to dependency which is detrimental to growth and development in developing countries. Such countries are web into some complex relationship that appears to only reinforce their present predicament. Reisen and Ndoye's (2008) research on China's role in African countries debt (2008) added a new approach to ways in which debt impacts the country. Through their study, they assumed that because China has an impact on debt ratio through stimulation of export and growth, it creates a negative effect in the reduction of product diversification, since countries tend to export the demanding product, which in this case is oil. By demanding and exporting energy commodities, Nigeria's export rises, while its reliance on its natural resources increases.

Discussion

China's Foreign aid only became conspicuous in the national budget and available online in 2003. The Chinese government had before 2003, considered its international development finance programme as a "state secret". China's foreign aid was categorized into three in the

2011 China’s white paper on foreign aid: grants, concessional loans and interest-free loans. While the first and last are source from China’s state finances, concessional loans are majorly financed by the Export-Import Bank of China. Based on the submission of Kitano and Harada (2016) that China’s foreign aid figures are “based on committed amounts and that disbursed amounts are still unpublished , caution is taken in the interpretation of estimates of aid to developing countries. Data for country-level finance development appears to be in dearth. The status of China as a donor can be said to be of recent origin. However, the “effect” of its financial assistance in the economic transformation of the African continent and Nigeria in particular appears to be unclear as opinions among researchers continue to differ. Broadly, the financial assistance in lump-sum over the globe from China has been disproportionately distributed across communications (\$4.1 billion), energy generation and Supply (\$11.3 billion), Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (\$ 1.4 billion), Industry, mining and construction (\$4.4 billion), action relating to debt (\$12.3 billion), transport and storage (\$23.1 billion) and everything else (\$25.4 billion) (CNBC, 2017). This has continued to soar as depicted in the Fig below.

Figure 1: Chinese Global Foreign Aid



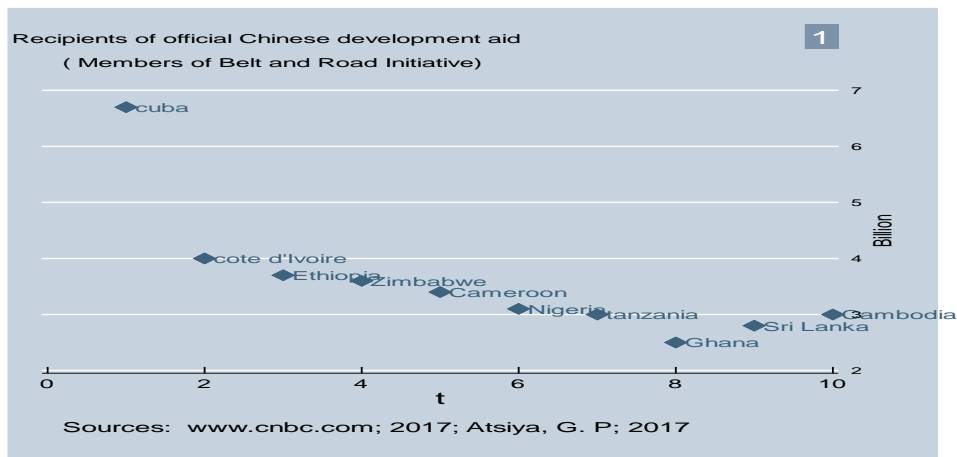
From the year official foreign Expenditure was made public (2003), it can be seen from the above figure that the rate of increase in Chinese foreign assistance to developing countries has continued to rise unabated. There was dramatic upsurge in the level of global assistance from

2006-2007. Similar rise was again experience between 2010 and 2011 but appear to be plateauing especially in 2015. This could be attributed to the global economic down turn effect.

In Africa, from the figure below, Cote d'Ivoire amongst African members of Belt and Road Initiative appears to enjoy greater patronage from China.

ICT Infrastructure Backbone Project respectively CNY (Chinese Renmimbi Yuan)

Fig 2: Foreign Aids to Members of Belt and Road Initiative



With respect to foreign loans as a component of financial aids, there are concerns that most developing countries are likely to drift into debt traps due to the increasing patronage of Chinese Banks offering appetizing loans. Due to weak institutions, the productivity of such loans is greatly compromised with potential difficulties in repayment. Further, there is indiscriminate advancing of loans to economies without respite to the quality of governance in terms of rule of law. More succinctly, there is no association between financial aids from China and governance in developing countries (CNBC). To what extent this has strengthened obnoxious regimes in these countries and retarded their economic growth rates is still in need of objective evidence.

Chinese foreign aid expenditure has increased steadily in the past decade, growing from US\$631 million in 2003 to close to US\$3 billion in 2015, with an average annual growth

rate of 14%. The steepest growths were observed between 2005 and 2008, when annual growth rates range between 14% and 45%. A sluggish growth of less than 1% was observed in 2015, the lowest growth rate yet since 2003. China has assisted Africa with numerous projects, the largest of which was the construction of the 1800-km Tanzania-Zambia railway which cost over US\$450 million. China has also constructed roads, wells and telecommunication facilities in Africa, with political allies being granted large projects to mark their independence such as airports, stadiums, palaces, government buildings and factories.

China is working closely with Nigeria to strengthen its Chinese-Nigeria strategic partnership, reflecting the importance of their economic relations. Looking at the physical infrastructure transformation, China won its biggest foreign contract on the amount of \$12 billion with the Nigerian government to build another train system. This train system is said to run 871 miles from Lagos (West) to Calabar (East). Others include the \$ 500 million for airport terminals in Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt and Kano. \$ Million hydroelectric power plant in Niger State. \$600 million to build light railway in Abuja. \$ 7.5billion loan for the construction standard rail gauge from Lagos to Kano. \$1.4 billion of the loan was for construction of rail from Lagos to Ibadan. \$ 6.1 billion for Ibadan to Illorin, Minna, Kaduna and Kano amongst others.

Investigations from the study also showed that China has not only positioned itself as a good trading partner, but also as a good lender to African countries that now prefer borrowing from China. Its aid program is glued to its economic engagement, and it features characteristics that differs from the West is appealing to developing countries. China's foreign aid initiative as compared to the West is the infrastructure funding. For several reasons, Western aid for infrastructure falls way behind funding for the social sectors. China is willing to give loans and grants for building infrastructure in African countries with less rigid and complex conditions. Its implementation of aid offer is attractive and compelling. Considering that most African countries have been subjected to many conditions from the West, the World Bank, and the International Monetary fund (IMF) for development projects in their countries, the

ability to have these restrictions lifted is solace for African leaders. These two components to its aid program give China an unfathomable advantage in Africa. Other attributes of China's package include, the increase of investments despite debt, the refusal to slow debt-financed infrastructure, and the ease of the debt cancellation process. Loans from China and the West are unequalled. On the other hand, China's role on debt and its impact on Nigeria's economic growth can be scrutinized through its method of operations.

No doubt Nigeria is the most salient beneficiary of Chinese financial assistance. It is also among the beneficiaries of new lending mostly through export credit from China. Nigeria received a comparatively modest amount of export credit from OECD sources: \$455.8 million between 2003 and 2006. In 2006, the Export-Import Bank of China signed globally \$4.24 billion export buyer credits, and actually disbursed \$2.27 billion to Nigeria as its major client. President Jonathan visited China in July, 2013, and the highlight of his visit was the signing of a Chinese loan of 1.5 billion US dollars for the development of infrastructure in Nigeria, including the expansion of four airports at Lagos, Kano, Abuja and Port Harcourt. The new Chinese loan of 1.5 billion US dollars brings to a total of nearly 15 billion China's investments and loans to Nigeria in recent years, including the 2.5 billion US dollars investment in the newly refurbished Lagos-Kano rail line. This amount excludes the \$2 billion from China to finance the deficit in the 2016 budget amongst others by President Muhammadu Buhari on assuming office. The consistent lending of China to Nigeria will further plunge the country into another debt trap, that Nigeria will have trouble detaching itself from, considering that a substantial sum of revenues has been disappearing from the government's account. It is common to argue that continuous borrowing or receiving foreign aid will lead to dependency which is detrimental to growth and development in developing countries. Such countries are webbed into some complex relationship that appears to only reinforce their present predicament.

Notably, debt accumulation through loans for infrastructure is not the only problem bedeviling Nigeria. Its policy of "oil for cash" is equally controversial and tricky. China has imbued some substantial amount of money in the energy sector of the economy. Through the

procurement of soil assets and oil blocks in Nigeria, China has advanced a huge amount of capital in the energy sector that will be hard to trace due to fraud for the acquisition of the several assets now owned by Chinese companies.

China's aid package needs to be perceived based on its function and method of promoting debt and influence in Nigeria. Debt accumulation is designed in a trapped cycle of aid from China. China structures its aid package in such a way that it gives many favours and facilitates countries thrive to increase aid from China, while increasing their debts. Chinese method is principally developed to give China business opportunities while increasing other countries' debt.

A cycle of consistent lending has been designed that impedes and poses a challenge to debt sustainability through China's loan, aid and debt relief program. By using debt relief to assist the country, turning it into loans and later relieve the debt, which increases widespread support and enhances its stronghold on governments. China's method of operation of non-interference also promotes corruption, which affects debt in Nigeria. Nigeria is a weak country where most revenues come from the oil sector, and this revenue has had a tendency to disappear. Nigeria's politics has long been an open scramble for power in which elites, often utilizing the ethnic card and playing up tribalism and religious differences, compete for control of the state in order to capture the mega benefits associated with the country's enormous oil revenues.

China's presence in Nigeria tends hinder export diversification and also has a negative impact on debt sustainability because it reduces product diversification. This in turn lowers standards, undermines democratic institutions and increases corruption, because Nigeria is an oil rich nation that depends on it. By increasing the demand on raw material and encouraging exports of raw material, China heightens Nigeria's dependency on its commodity, which has been the major source of fraud and debt accumulation over the years. Loans and grants have assisted Nigeria improve some of its infrastructure, while increasing its debt through the attribution of enormous contracts to China at the cost of excluding local markets that do not

benefit from any of the contracts. The loan cycle has significantly favoured China more than Nigeria.

It is important to categorically state that increase in aid and donor (China) policies do not give priority to poverty reduction. Governments of developed countries do not appear to be making the transition from rhetoric to action. The volumes of resources available for poverty reduction is threatened both by aid budget cuts as well as by the diversion of funds for other purposes such as emergency relief and debt forgiveness.

The rationale for raising external loan by third world countries (Nigeria) has always been to bridge the gap between domestic gap and available resources capacity in order to accelerate economic development. In that light, no one would blame third world countries for resorting to borrowing provided the proceeds are utilized in a productive venture that will facilitate the eventual serving and liquidation of the debt. But instead, debts in developing countries exist as the key mechanism for transfer of wealth from weak to strong, from debt nations to international creditors. It is therefore simply impossible to speak of any meaningful or significant measure of development for as long as we are obliged to allocate so much of our lean resources for debt serving.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is clear that several scholars have not yet adequately addressed certain issues in the Nigeria-China economic relations which relates to the inherent domestic problems facing Nigeria. These challenges include the implementation processes in strategic partnership, leadership style, policy change, evaluation and monitoring processes and interrogating the impact and benefits of foreign aid received to Nigeria. Nigeria stands to gain a lot from China by investing the inflow of resources from the commodity booms in improving investment climate, developing human resources necessary to support investment in new industries and ensuring the provision of long-term financing to provide financial support to private investors. Towards this end, there must be good and transparent governance while implementing these initiatives in order to ensure that the desired outcomes are realized.

Successful implementation of these initiatives under good governance will create necessary conditions for Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to have significant backward and forward linkages in the Nigerian economy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommends that Nigeria should focus on how China's engagement in Africa fits into the broader picture of international engagement. Specifically, Nigeria has the chance to diversify its economy by balancing Western assistance with that of China but needs to better comprehend how each type of aid can be favourable, and to what sectors, in order to implement a successful strategy. For instance, China's experience as a more disciplined Society has the capacity to curb corruption in Nigeria, while the United States' devotion to human rights and transparency prevents an abuse of power. There is also the need to discourage leaders on constant borrowing and reliance on foreign aid, because it only leads to dependency and breeds corruption due to absence of good policies, accountable and transparent leaders to channel its appropriate use. Finally, Nigerians should be pro-active as they strive to "build institutions". Critical to the success of any agreement is an effective institutional framework, particularly a public service dedicated to excellence and efficiency and supportive of reforms. The government cannot achieve the professed goals of Sino- Nigeria economic relations due to weak management and corruption. Also, the support of civil society organizations must be sought for.

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