

## **AFRICA AND DEVELOPMENT THEORIES: AN EXAMINATION OF THE CHINESE OPTION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In terms of natural resources, Africa is the richest continent in the world. By all indices and indicators, Africa remains the poorest continent. Confronted with the issues of sustainable development; African countries were presented different theories of development, mostly by the capitalist western nations. Development theorists' in Latin America and African scholars also theorized on the list of possible options to accelerate development in Africa. Yet none of these theories appear to be visible to lift African countries out of poverty and underdevelopment. In this contemporary era, some African countries practicalized the Chinese option as development strategy or patterns in development. This paper, attempts an examination of the Chinese option. It examines how viable this option may be for Africa with emphasis on Nigeria. The paper is purely a theoretical and or position paper. To this end therefore, it relies more on secondary sources and focus group discussion, as its method of research. This paper recommends for an effective Research and Development Unit for African countries. It de-emphasizes foreign loans and suggests delinking from the East and West as possible strategies to enhance development in Africa.*

**Keywords:** Development, Sustainable development, Poverty, Natural Resources, Foreign loans and debts.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Africa is unarguable one of the most fertile regions of the world and the richest continent on earth in terms of natural resources. These natural resources have not been utilized for the development of the region. As a result, the script of western world, namely maintaining Africa as a source for raw materials for the developed capitalist world has continued to be sustained.

Having realized the need to harness the natural resources in Africa for the development of the region; many African countries shortly after independence embraced some development theories and strategies, some of these development theories were formulated by development theorists from the capitalist west. Other development theories and strategies emanated from African and Latin America.

In addition to these strategies, African countries went in to some serious bilateral agreements with some western and later eastern bloc with the intention of engineering the development of their countries. For over fifty (50) years of the trials, the reality on ground indicates clearly that Africa is largely underdeveloped.

One country that has enjoyed enormous bilateral relations with Africa in this contemporary era is China. The essence of any bilateral relations among sovereigns states, be it diplomatic, trade or otherwise, has always been for the mutual reciprocity in the areas of political, diplomatic and economic gains. Most African countries at independence were still very much attached to their mother nations. As a result, could not establish diplomatic ties with other countries, particularly in Asia.

Lemuel (2014) also reported that by 1960, China recognized that western imperialism was a threat to the continent of Africa. For China to penetrate Africa she provided an alternative trajectory by offering bilateral relations that would foster development in the continent. Several factors account for this during the cold war; the capitalists west used ideological campaigns to prevent Africa, her colonies from having direct bilateral relations with China and other Asian countries. African leaders who tried to establish such strong relations were deterred or faced some sever consequences. For instance, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana was toppled

when he was on official tour to China. General Gown was also toppled ten months after he visited China. (Lemuel, 2014).

This notwithstanding, from 1960s to 1970s, some African countries (Nigeria inclusive) began to see China as a country to establish diplomatic relations. Following Deng Xiaoping's reform policies of the 1970s and 1980s, China began to experience dramatic growth, modernization and industrialization. These rapid developments began to endear China to Africa. Consequently, Africa began to look upon China as a possible alternative to that of western world, (Utomi 2008 ).

This paper is set to examine the China's option as against western allies in the development of Africa, with Nigeria as a case study .It is purely a position paper set to specifically assess how successful Nigeria's bilateral relation with China has been. It tends to address the issue of trade balance or deficit between both countries. Is it a win-win as anticipated? Has the terms of agreement been reciprocatory to both countries?

The paper relies more on secondary sources .Focus group discussion was also adopted. A focus group discussion involves gathering people from similar background or experiences together to discuss a specific topics of interest .It is a form of qualitative research where questions are asked about their perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, opinions or ideas.

The paper recommends among others; the need to delink with any country that refuses to establish or domesticate their industry with Nigeria; the paper recommends the need for a favorable terms of agreement, balance trade and it strongly advocates for technological transfer.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

In course of embarking on this research certain concepts were frequently employed. It is important to explain these concepts to avoid ambiguities.

**Development:** the term development is an ideologically loaded concept .It lacks a water-tight definition. Its definition and application is nebulous and contentious. The best approach is to view it as multidimensional and multifaceted concept (Kalagbor, 2004). In view of this, Rodney (1972) noted that development implies increased skill, capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, and responsibility and material well-being. At the level of social groups, development implies an increased capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships. While all human societies have experienced development, the levels of development vary from one society to another, and even within distinct parts of the same society.

Significantly, the ultimate purpose of development must be the development of man, the realization of human potentials and the liberation of man from poverty. In other words, true development at the individual level must seek to realize the creative potentials of man, enabling him to live a productive and healthy life and to improve his material conditions of living, through the use of resources available to him. It is a process by which man's personality is enhanced and it is this enhanced personality-creative, organized and disciplined which is the driving force behind the social-economic transformation of society. It also offers man personal, food, economic, social and political securities. All of these focused on people. In other words, development must be people oriented.

### **Theories of Development**

Many theories have been propounded to explain why some countries are developed, underdeveloped or developing. Prominent among these models or paradigms of development are; modernization paradigm, dependency paradigm, Basic Needs Approach etc.

**Modernization Paradigm:** Modernization theory emphasis that for traditional societies to develop they must shed their values and embrace that of modern societies. The implication is that capitalism is seen as only option to achieve development (Alapiki 2004). Modernization theory was a dominant paradigm of development from 1950 to 1970s.It was the earliest orthodox theory .It adopted evolutionary and diffusionist approach to development. Scholars of this orientation are mostly Euro-American scholars among them include; Adams Smith, Thomas Malthus, John Mill, David Ricardo, W .W. Rostow.

Their basic assumption is that societies and countries must assume a unilineal trajectory mostly with examples from the west to attain development. This linear stage of growth model of development was

propounded in the 1950s by W.W Rostow, in the *Stages of Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*. Rostow argued that advanced countries had all passed through these series of stages. He designated the stages as follows 1) the traditional society, 2 the precondition for takeoff, 3) the take off; 4) the drive to maturity and 5) the age of high production (Offiong, 1980). Another underlying factor in this theory is that these states desiring to develop must transform wholesale their institutions, structures, functions, attitudes, ideals, beliefs, orientations and value systems to those found and prevalent in modern societies.

**Dependence paradigm;** the concept of dependency is often associated with a Brazilian sociologist; Cardoso. The theory has its origin in Latin America. Scholars in this school of thought includes; Dos Santos, Andre Gunder Frank, Samir Amin, Claude Ake, Daniel Offing. Dependency differs sharply with modernization theory on the source of under development. Dependency blames underdevelopment to both external and internal factors although it places emphasis on the external, imperialism (Ibaba 2004). The argument, essentially, is that imperialism as perpetrated by the west against third world countries, created an international capitalist system, and integrated the backward countries into it. In that system the third world countries or the peripheral states are made to engage in an unequal trade with the core states and were by this relationship made to be provider of raw materials to the developed countries who in turn exploited their resources for their own development. The conclusion by this theory is that it would be a vicious circle and that Africa and other developing countries cannot achieve development through this paradigm of modernization. The present level of under development in Africa attests to this fact. As Rodney (1972) puts it; Africa went into colonialism with a hoe and came out with a hoe”.

**Basic Needs Approach (BNA) To Development:** India was the first country to adopt this strategy of development in 1974. The term Basic Needs Approach focuses on the fact that people need food, shelter, water, and medical services to survive. The paradigm emphasis participatory development which involves the people. In recognition of the Universal truism, Article 25 (1) of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1948) explicitly states that

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

Kalagbor (2004), itemized the basic elements of the BNA theory as follows; security needs, welfare needs, identity needs, freedom needs. India has considerably experienced some level of development as she embarked on it, when compared to African countries.

Other practical methods of development adopted by African Countries include; import substitution industrialization, profit repatriation export promotion, commercial and privatization, integrated rural development, regional integration, monetary policies such as borrowing or seeking aids, technology transfer, reforms, such as structural adjustment programme, downsizing etc., and of course mutual bilateral relations.

The focus of this paper is on the bilateral relation between Africa and China with Nigeria as a case study. However, courtesy reviews of some basic theories in development were made though not extensive but to provide the necessary knowledge with regard these familiar theories of development. The conclusion here is that these theories as postulated never solved Africa’s search for development, hence the need to experiment on strong economic relations with China, which is the second largest economy in the world. The paper is set to address the possibility of these strong economic tiers with China as development partner. Can this relation engender the development of Africa, nay Nigeria?

## **HISTORY OF SINO-AFRICA RELATIONS**

Sino-African relationship dates back to the ancient times. There were speculations that Chinese empire made contact with Africa as early as second century B.C. Lemuel (2014), emphasized that the silks that Cleopatra of Egypt wore were believed to have its origin from China as a proof of a relation between Egypt and China. To further reiterate the antiquity of this relations, Chinese activities in Africa was also dated back to the Tang Dynasty when Chinese porcelains were uncovered along the coast of Egypt and Chinese coins dating back to the 9<sup>th</sup> century were excavated in places further south of the Sahara such as Kenya, Zanzibar and Somalia.

Several factors affected and consequently delayed the regular and formal establishment of Chinese-African relations. These factors include internal issues in China, the arrival of western European nations and the subsequent economic activities with African nations.

The Cold War era was a period when diplomatic relations were guided by the ideological divide in the world. It was a period of tensed global relations as the world was divided into two ideological divide between capitalist west and communist east. China as a communist country actually began to search for ideological allies against capitalist west. Therefore attempts were made to woo African countries to tow the communist path .Events such as the Bandung conference did little to convince most conservative government in Africa to do business with China (Lemuel, 2014).

This did not deter China, to demonstrate her wiliness to do business with Africa; China began to give support to various national liberation movements. In the 1960s China contributed to Africa's military power by assisting and training liberation groups like Mugabe's Zanu. In 1958, China quickly recognized Algeria's National Liberation Front and provided the new government with small weapons (Maverick, 2000). In 1960, it provided the rebels in Guinea-Bissau, in Mozambique, the FRELIMO received guerilla training and weapons from China. During the 1960s-1970s, China provided military training and weapons to any African country that was not already supported by the soviet union, Some military assistance turned out to be failures: After supporting Angola's MPLA, the Chinese authorities switched sides and began supporting UNITA, which managed to fully grasp power in the country. From 1967 to 1976 China transferred \$142 million in arms to Africa (Congo-Brazzaville, Tanzania and Zaire being the major recipients). Though in the 1980's, China's sales of arms to African countries dropped significantly. This notwithstanding, the assistance China gave to some African countries in 1960s to 1970s exceeded the borders of international policies. Apart from this, China also began to invest in capital projects all over Africa. An example was the Tanzania-Zanzibar railway line, the biggest aid project the in Africa. With this project many African countries began to engage in bilateral relations with China, (Utomi, 2008).

As earlier enunciated, Africa is the richest continent in the world in terms of natural resources and so would be pull force that would attract any country to do business with her. Maverick (2020), asserts that the search for raw materials is one of the reasons why China intensified her business with Africa. For instance, Africa is estimated to contain 90% of the entire world supply of platinum and cobalt, half of the world's gold supply, two-thirds of world manganese, and 35% of the world's uranium. It also accounts for nearly 75% of the world's coltan, an important mineral used in electronic devices, including cell phones. Other natural resources in Africa include; diamonds, silver, large oil reserves, natural gas etc.

Apart from tapping from the resource-rich Africa, China considers Africa an important partner in its One Belt One Road (OBOR).China's one Belt One Road is an elaborate economic development plan to improve corporation and trade among approximately 78 countries spanning Asia, Africa, and Europe.

As it became evident that the imperialist west could not engineer the much needed development in Africa, some African governments, began to make serious contact with China. Nigeria joined the league of African countries doing business with China on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1971 (Utomi , 2008 ).

**Sino-Nigeria Relations:** Nigeria at independence did not entertain any diplomatic relation with china but she had with the republic of China (Taiwan), during Nigeria's first republic under Prime Minister Sir Tafawa Belewa (1960-1966). In fact the premier of the northern region Alhaji Ahmadu Bello invited Taiwan to take advantage of the thriving cotton production in his region. This relation with Taiwan did not lead to cordial diplomatic ties with China itself. Within this period, 1960-1970, Nigeria had series of challenges which culminated to the Nigeria civil war. It therefore affected the relationship with China that was about to flourish. Also, the attempts and indications by China to support the secessionist Biafra affected the development of diplomatic tiers with her. However, at the end of the civil war in early 1970, Nigeria along with other African countries began to re-align herself diplomatically with other countries.

By 1970, diplomatic ties with China intensified. 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 (Lemuel, 2014).

With this growing robust relation, Nigeria pursued formal establishment of diplomatic ties with China. Thus, by 10<sup>th</sup>, February, 1971, Nigeria formalize her diplomatic relations with China. To mark this diplomatic tie, Nigerian's head of state, General Yakubu Gowon visited China in 1974 and became the first head of state to do so.

However, ten months later, by 1975 through a coup Gowon was toppled from office, Lemuel (2014). This affected the emerging diplomatic ties with China. When General, Olusegun Obasanjo came into power in 1976, steps were taken to strengthen china-Nigeria relations. There were diplomatic visits by both countries for trade in 1978 and 1979. Part of the agreement at this period included the sending of medical personals and agricultural experts to Nigeria.

Again, between 1980 to 1990s, Nigeria faced political turmoil marked by series of coup d'états. However, during the military regime of Gen. Sani Abacha, Sino-Nigeria economic relation improved considerably. At this period, the West imposed some sanctions against Abacha's military regime. By 1997 the Chinese premier Le Peng visited Nigeria and initiated the protocols for the signing of agreement on power generation, steel, oil and the construction of Nigeria's railway network by China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation at the cost of US\$ 529 million. However, it took several years before the aims of the contract and protocols came to fruition. Shortly after this period Sino-Nigeria relations improved exponentially. As Lemuel (2014) reported from 1999 to May 2003 Sino-Nigeria economic relations witnessed robust relations so much so that many Chinese firms won major contracts in the country. To cement the relationship, both countries agreed on the establishment of a Nigeria Trade office in China and a China Investment Development and Trade Promotion in Nigeria. In 2006, Nigeria-China investment forum was established. Also in that same year, 2006, President Hu jintao of China visited Nigeria and address a joint session of Nigeria's National Assemble. After which, both nations signed a memoranda of understanding on establishing a strategic partnership. Again, China supported Nigeria's bid for the seat in the United Nations Security Council.

As other advanced countries refused to assist Nigeria in the fight against insurgents in the oil rich Niger Delta region, Nigeria developed close military cooperation with China. China in turn supplied army equipment and also provided military training to Nigerian soldiers. Both countries signed US\$ 311million agreement on communication, space programmes. Consequently, China helped in the development and launching of Nigeria communication satellite (Nigcomsat-1) in 2007. This expand cellular and internet networks beyond Nigeria to neighboring countries in Central Africa, before it was lost in space (Ogunkola, Adewumyi and Bankole, 2008).

Obasanjo's foreign policy towards China and other Asian countries could be tagged as oil for infrastructure. Though Nigeria's foreign policy suffered from inconsistency, following change of governments.

**Win-win or Trade Imbalance:** The aim of this paper is to examine the Sino-Nigeria relation which has lasted for fifty years. Could it be said to be win –win? Was the trade based on equal reciprocity? Did Nigeria achieve her aims of having strong economic ties with China? Was it a favourable trade or were the terms of agreement favourable? Few examples in this paper illustrates that the benefit to Nigeria is very minimal. Instead, some of the Chinese economic activities in Nigeria were harmful to the economy. For instance, Chinese policy on agriculture seems to threaten food production in Africa. In order to feed her population of more than 1.3 billion China had to invest in agriculture in Africa and elsewhere from where they hope to export food to China. China leased agricultural lands for the next 50years to 100yeras in Kwara, Niger, Delta States of Nigeria, (David and Joshua, 2012).

Not only in the agricultural sector had the Chinese economic activities affected, but also the textile industry. China imported cotton from some African countries; namely, Burkina Faso, Benin, Mali, Guinea, Nigeria, Togo, Central African Republic. David and Joshua (2012), argued that the importation of these materials by China is responsible for closure of about 65 textile mills in Nigeria and laying off our 150,000 textile workers over the years thus increasing unemployment in Nigeria. But Nigeria on the other hand, imported inferior, cheap and sub-standard products from China. Thus, placing China at a comparative advantage against Nigeria in her bilateral relations. Apart from this, the number of Chinese traders in Nigeria has increased but without corresponding Nigerian traders in China. It is therefore apparent that this Sino-Nigeria relation

reveals an uneven balance sheet of investment as there are no corresponding amount of investments in China by Nigeria.

China had a surplus trade with Nigeria during the period 2003-07. The trade surplus rose by almost 91% in 2005 and 24% in 2007 for agricultural, while it rose by about 41,45 and 27 % in 2005, 2006 and 2007, respectively for non-agricultural (Abutu 2012). The total trade surplus of China against Nigeria was \$3.3billion in 2007. Again, between 2005 and 2018 the trade deficit stood at N6.83 Trillion (which exchanges for about \$17.5billion) in favour of China.

It is true that China is investing heavily in Africa, but the driving spirit for this investment is to repatriate their surplus back to China. As Igwe (2010) reported that much of the 60million Chinese who live outside the country are economic forces to reckon with. They also give back heavily to their country in terms of remittances and investments.

This deficit in trade with China, notwithstanding, some authors are of the opinion that the Chinese option as against western capitalist country would accelerate development in Africa. Zafar (2007) argues that the Chinese model of investment is capable of assisting economic growth and development in Africa as it usually has “no strings attached” to all investment and infrastructural loans. It follows that most of the loans advanced by China are at Zero percent interest, long term facilities. It is however, important to note that most of the Chinese sponsored projects in Nigeria and Sub Saharan Africa are executed through Chinese labour as against local labour those repatriating and remitting their capital back to China. In this way one could conclude that Chinese companies are not contributing to the increasing in local employment rate and local economy.

Chinese companies have also involved in hydro-dams and thermal stations construction of stadium, railway, road networks and airport among others. One of these projects is the \$8.3 billion project to rebuild the derelict railway between Lagos and Kano. Others are investment of \$6billion in railways oil refinery and power in exchange for rights to drill oil in Nigeria by Chinese Oil and Natural Gas Corporation.

However, for Nigeria to benefit maximally in her China relations, currency swap with China has been proposed. Nigerian business men and manufacturers would gain from the currency swap as it would unlock business potentials and opportunities as obstacles in the use of dollars would be eliminated. Secondly, dollars have inflated prices. This would enable Nigerians to buy Chinese goods at a reasonably lower prices. Though it is also argued that cheap prices from China may put local manufacturers out of business.

Technological Transfer which has long been advocated by most African countries in the bilateral agreement with some countries as a means to fast tract development has not been implemented with Nigeria China relations.

In addition, China imported huge amount of timber from Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Nigeria. But China is aware of logging and hence placed ban on it but they are willing to buy huge timber from Africa. To this extend China has considerably plundered and compromised the ecology of some African countries.

**Corruption:** It is evident by the dependency theory that external factor is a major element in the under development of Africa, Igwe (2010) argued persuasively that in as much as the west plundered Africa, Africans particularly her leaders have adversely looted and underdeveloped Africa through unbridled corruption. In fact, Transparency International describes it as lootocracy. In 1999, the Economist estimated that African leaders had stowed \$20bn in Swiss bank accounts. As a result, from 1970-1996, capital flights from 30 sub-Saharan countries totaled \$187bn, outstripping those same nations external debts.

The Chinese are aware of this heartless looting and hence are favourably disposed to deepening corruption in Africa for the interest of China. For instance, in Angola, China did not insist on transparent, accountancy or the assurance of good governance.

## **DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS**

Being a qualitative research, the focus group discussion was adopted .The focused group discussion took place at the Rivers State University and Ignatius University of Education all in Port Harcourt. The general observation from the discussion is that they view China as an imperialist nation that employs subtle method

of dealing with African countries, hence they are not much interested in re-colonizing Africa as it were, rather, they interesting in doing business with her. The terms of reference must be in favour of China. The Chinese as a result of their subtle way of penetrating Africa, do not want to integrate into the social life of the people. They also prefer to use their people to execute contracts in Nigeria instead of the local people therefore increasing unemployment in the country.

Logically, the main purpose of granting soft loan to African countries is to help absorb the large population of cheap labour in China. The target of this soft loan is to provide job opportunities for her people. It therefore follows, that whatever gains that are accruable from this soft loan is repatriated to China through capital flights and remittances .The anticipated multiplier effects of huge some of billion dollars project is denied the country.

Finally, they are willing to use any available means to achieve their aims. In other words, they encourage corruption in Africa.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Imperialism remains imperialism, whether it is perpetrated by the west or the east, chain is chain whether it is gold plated or silver plated .The important thing is that it restraints and limits the movement of the victim. The imperialist tactics of China is not explicit. It is convent and hiding under the guise of soft loan. Already many African countries, that have collected loans from China, are now heavily indebted and are finding it extremely difficult to pay back. As it were, they may need to compromise some sectors of their economy. Zambia is good example to illustrate this point.

Available evidence as enunciated in this paper indicates clearly that the Sino-Nigerian relations are in favour of China. The paper also concludes that the anticipated benefits with trade with China are yet to be realized.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Walter 1972, has suggested that the way out of Africa's under development was a radical break from the capitalist west who are the principal agents of Africa's underdevelopment. He recommended south south co-operations. This recommendation by dependency theorists must have contributed in one way or the other in propelling African governments to enter into bilateral agreement with China. Over fifty years of this Chinese option, African countries nay Nigeria is yet to achieve any meaningful development that could move her people out of poverty

On this note therefore, it is recommended that the terms of agreement and or memorandum of understanding must be stated clearly on issues of transfer of technology. Chinese firms wishing to do business in Nigeria must domesticate their firms, must own assembly plants, train Nigerians. Chinese firms doing business in Nigeria must employ Nigerians and pay according to the salary structures in Nigeria. Salary discrepancies between Chinese workers and Nigerian workers must be discouraged.

Logging in Nigeria for the benefits of China should be discouraged. This study affirms that Nigeria would benefit more if she could develop her fertile landmass by investing in food production for the benefits of both countries

The Federal Government through the Central Bank should complete agreement and arrangement for the currency swap between Nigeria and China. Such agreement must be clearly written to the understanding of Nigerians and must be correctly interpreted in English and in Chinese languages.

Nigerian Government needs to formulate policies that would protect the local industries against Chinese influx of goods that could be manufactured locally.

One sure strategy of attaining development in any nation is the establishment of Research and Development Department. Nigerian Government needs to invest massively on research and development.

In this paper, it was clear that the imperialist west under-developed Africa, and in this contemporary era, China's economic activities indicate financial deficit for Nigeria and surplus for China. These are exogenous factors to Africa's under-development. The internal factor to under-development in Africa is evident at the high level of corruption. For Nigeria or any African country to develop the issue of corruption must be tackled from all flanks. If corruption is tackled frontally and drastically reduced, the gains would assist to accelerate development in Africa, Nigeria inclusive.

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