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THE IMPLICATIONS OF CHINA'S INCREASING PRESENCE IN AFRICA ON NIGERIA'S AFRO-CENTRICISM

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ABSTRACT
Development scholars and social scientists generally have been trying to rack their brain around the factors that have seemingly driven China's interests and increasing inroads into Africa to the discomfort of other global economic players such as America and Britain. This paper has tried to contribute to the search for answers to the question about China's new-found love for Africa and her under tapped and miss tapped resources and market coupled with Nigeria's diminishing dominance in Africa due to her domestic challenges. The objectives of this paper are: to investigate what has accounted for china's increasing presence in Africa; to analyze the reactions from African states on China's presence in Africa and to unbundled the implications of china's presence on Nigeria's Afro-centrism. The paper adopted a qualitative method of data collection. Constructivism was used to provide a better understanding of the concept of China's increasing presence and its effects on Nigeria's Afro-centrism. The findings of this paper are: China's presence in Africa is as a result of Africa's rich natural resources and markets, the reactions from African states on Chinese presence in Africa have been positive since it has brought investments and development to the continent and the implication of China's presence in Africa is that it has reduced Nigeria's bargaining power continentally and globally, and there are also political, security, economic and cultural effects also. The paper recommends that since China's increasing presence in Africa is as a result of the continent's enormous natural resources and quest for market, African countries must strengthen their institutional capacities to enthrone and uphold transparency and accountability in their dealings with China. African states should closely monitor China's investments interests as well as its legal frameworks. Given that China's in road into Africa has had a number of effects on Nigeria's Afro-centrism coupled with its internal challenges, there is need for Nigeria to address her internal challenges in the areas of insecurity, corruption, economic, healthcare, educational challenges as well as infrastructural deficits.
Keywords: Implications, Increasing, presence, Africa, Afro-centricism.

Introduction

Development scholars and social scientists generally have been trying to rack their brain around the factors that have seemingly necessitated the new China's driven interests and increasing inroads into Africa to the discomfort of other global economic players such as America and Britain. In realization of this fact, this is an attempt to understand the level of china's penetration and find answers to the question about China's new-found love for Africa and her under tapped and miss tapped resources**.** Every nation of the world desires to expand and dominate beyond its territorial boundary in order to gain relevance and recognition and equally promote her interests and aspirations among its peers. Having attained the status of an emerging power, China like any other nation aspiring to dominate at the international arena, began to expand her interests beyond her territorial boundary and these supposed interests are driven by economic, strategic, ideological, political and most recently, military considerations. The quest for expansionism and dominance is in the nature and character of all nations of the world except there is no capacity or limited available resources to pursue such ambition. From the foregoing, China has been trying to develop its relations with as many countries of the world as possible in the Middle East, Latin America and Africa. Africa has thus featured

more prominently on china's international relations lately. At first, china started with an economic interest which later metamorphosed into other areas of influence as well as international engagements. Among these new international diplomatic frontiers, China has been the most active in Africa, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, over the past two decades (Sutter, 2016). Although it is far from being a hegemon in Africa, China's growing presence, compared with others, is attracting the attention of people inside and outside the continent. There is no doubt that due to Africa's quest for economic developments, China has been able to take advantage of the vulnerability of the continent to further advance her interests. The generality of Africa has one relation or the other with China including Nigeria. Nigeria, being the most populous country in Africa with the largest economy is facing a lot of daunting challenges which have affected its influence in the last three decades. Therefore, Nigeria 's dominance of the continent has witnessed some draw backs due to enormous domestic challenges that has affected its growth and this has had a serious effect on Nigeria's validity on the African scene.

Morgenthau (1985), labeled nations that seek to acquire more power than they currently possess as revisionist power seekers because they seek to alter existing power relations and achieve greater status. He warned that such revisionist powers have historically pursued imperialist policies. This can also be attributed to expanding their markets for goods and services, for political reasons which is to expand their territory in order to increase their power and political influence and thus, look beyond their national borders for self-preservation against any aggressive attack.

The key factors propelling Chinese engagement in Africa can be summarized as a combination of domestic Chinese dynamics, desire to expand into new markets and international political factors (Alden, 2007 & Tull, 2006). Nigeria adopted an Afro-centric foreign policy posture by virtue of her economic resources, population, size and location, and also because of her leadership roles in Africa majorly in peace, security and development. Despite Nigeria's contributions to Africa's development, there has been a decline in its roles on the continent lately. Nigeria traditionally since independence has been a leading voice on the continent and this is in relation to peace keeping and peace support operations, economically and politically. However, in recent years, Nigeria's leadership roles have become challenging. This is due to various reasons ranging from economic instability, lack of or bad political leadership, corruption and insecurity which is now giving rise to Africa seeking for solutions to its problems and subsequently turning to China for assistance and development. On one hand, China's economic engagement with Africa has provided Nigeria with new opportunities for trade and investment. On the other hand, China's growing presence in Africa has also raised concerns about Nigeria's African influence vis-a-vis it Afro-centric foreign policy postures. The various pointers to China's rising presence in Africa showed that Africans are beginning to be comfortable with China's presence because China has offered them some leverages and opportunities which may have significantly affected their livelihoods.

Objectives of the Study

The central objective is to look into the various factors that have given rise to China's increasing presence in Africa and how it has affected Nigeria's African dominance. In specific terms, this paper seeks to answer the following questions:

(i) What has accounted for China's increasing presence in Africa?
(ii) What are the reactions from African states on China's increasing presence on the continent?
(iii) What are the implications of China's increasing presences on Nigeria's Afro-centrism?

Conceptual Framework

China's presence in Africa

China's interest in Africa is not new. In the 1960s and 1970s, China's interest centred on building ideological solidarity with other underdeveloped nations to advance Chinese-style of communism and

repel Western 'imperialism' (Ogunsanwo, 1974). During the Cold War, Chinese interests evolved into more pragmatic pursuits such as trade, investment and energy. In recent years, China has identified the African continent as an area of significant economic and strategic interest (Taylor, 2007 & Melber, 2007). According to Large (2008), over the years and particularly from the 1950s, China has gained noticeable footsteps in Africa through its foreign policy objectives, such that it has dramatically reduced the monopoly of Western countries' dominance that have for long enjoyed massive footprints in Africa since the era of colonialism.

There are a number of factors that have contributed to the growing ties between China and Africa. One factor is China's need for natural resources, such as oil, gas, minerals, markets for its goods and services etc. Africa is a major source of these resources and China has been eager to secure access to them. Another factor is China's desire to expand its global influence. Africa is a large and growing market, and China sees it as an important part of its plans to become a global superpower and being the second largest economy after the United States, China is therefore positioning itself strategically in the comity of nations.

Nigeria's Afro-centricism

Nigeria's Afro-centricism is a foreign policy direction towards Africa which was adopted at independence, which ultimately commits Nigeria to the continent needs, aspirations and development. Ola (2017), noted, it is an appreciation of the enormous challenge which destiny inadvertently placed on the shoulders of Nigeria at independence. According to him, making Africa the Centerpiece of Nigeria's foreign 'policy connotes that the country would perform acts of benevolence, kindness and sacrifices geared towards the good of Africa. According to Garba (2022), the key assumption of the Afrocentric policy thrust is that Africa and issues affecting the continent at large shall occupy the very central position of Nigeria's foreign policy objectives, rather than its domestic interest being the priority. The principle implies that in Nigeria's foreign relations, African related matters shall be accorded utmost attention and priority. Fawole (2003), Olusanya & Akindele (1990), have attempted to explain the rationale for this principle. They argued that given the fact that Nigeria is geo-politically located on the continent of Africa and because she is indisputably Africa's and Black race's most populous country, Nigeria carried the burden of history. The realization of these historical and geographical status of Nigeria by Nigerian elites before independence in 1960, had probably informed an Afro-centric conception of Nigerian foreign policy shortly after independence (Chazan et al, 1988 & Fawole, 2000). A major foreign policy leap in the area of Afro-centrism by the Babangida regime was the establishment of the Directorate of Technical Aid Corps program (TAC) in 1987 (Daura, 2010). As proposed by the Scheme, Nigeria would send young professionals in the fields of law, medicine, surveying, engineering and pharmacy, among others to needy countries in Africa, Caribbean and the pacific (ACP) for an initial two-year duration. Babangida, as pointed out by Fawole (2000), had declared that Nigeria was one country every other country in West Africa and Africa in general looks up to, to provide the necessary leadership.

Methodology

This paper adopted the qualitative method of data collection. This involves consultation of relevant literature such as books, internet sources, newspapers, journals, articles etc. on the various concepts relating to China's increasing presence in Africa and its implications for Nigeria's Afro-centrism.

Theoretical framework

This paper adopted the theory of constructivism as its theoretical framework. Constructivism is a theory in International Relations which holds that developments in international relations are being constructed through social processes in accordance with ideational factors such as identity, norms, rules, etc. The term 'Constructivism' encompasses a wide range of theoretical perspectives whose converging point is

the view that 'we have no direct access to reality'. Constructivism states that international relations are socially constructed. This means that these social connections are made through a social means of interactions which have socially applied connotations and by this means generate responses rather than been given or inherent. But the Social world that is accessible to us, is constructed through our social relations. These social relations are constructed through the ideas we share about the world. The term 'Constructivism' was coined for International Relations by Nicholas Greenwood Onuf in his book, World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations (1989). However, it was the works of Alexander Wendt, especially his 1992 article, Anarchy is what State Makes of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics, and his 1999 book, Social theory of International Politics which popularized Constructivism in international relations. Wendt's version of Constructivism, a state-centric and structural one, helped it to find a place among the mainstream theories of International Relations. Wendt (1992), stated that "anarchy is what states make of it," expressing the common postmodernist critique of reality as being socially constructed. States view the world in terms of their elites' beliefs, identities, and social norms. Constructivism is most appropriate for this paper because it states that international relationships are socially constructed. Meaning china's increasing presence in Africa is as a result of its continuous social interactions which includes economic cooperation, conflict resolutions through peace keeping, social exchanges and capacity building etc, which is now a threat to Nigeria's Afrocentrism.

Literature Review

This study reviews existing literatures on China's increasing presence in Africa and their potential impacts on Nigeria's Afro-centrism. Schoeman (2008), Carrillo, Hood & Kadetz (2017), contend that China's relations with Africa have over the years, come with much scrutiny in the sense that like European countries, it is also after African resources as to meet the demands of its ever-increasing industrial and manufacturing sector vis-a-vis its population. According to Alden & Wu (2017), China's engagement with Africa is not a new phenomenon as their relations date back to as far back as 1368-1644, often known as the 'Ming Dynasty'. China has undertaken immense investments in Africa over the past three decades (Song & Golley, 2011). These have been spearheaded by China's Official Development Assistance (ODA) and its foreign policy to be a new donor to Africa's development as the continent is in dire need of Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) for its economic growth and development. Beijing has thus regarded Africa as a continent where it can extract its resources and the platform for Chinese firms to build their plants and create employment opportunities (Thrall, 2015). However, China has often downplayed itself as a state in need of African resources for its economy rather portraying itself as another developing country intending to be a recognizable driver to Africa's economic growth prospects. As Besada (2013), points out, what is being done by Beijing in terms of African investments is what any global player would do as is the case with various European countries and the USA. While China's unique economic approach to Africa meets the African countries' need for funding and infrastructure projects, the model has been widely criticized. In particular, China's natural resource-backed loans raise questions about the continent's future and its capacity for sustainable development (Yun, 2014).

The origin of China's engagements in Africa and its current status

The early years of Chinese trade and diplomatic engagements in Africa were not widely spread. It was not until the early 2000s that China's economic and political engagement with Africa began to grow significantly. Trade relations between China and Africa date back to the first Han emperors of the Second Century B.C. with the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, China took a renewed interest in the promotion of Afro-Asian economy and cultural cooperation which also supported independence movements in various forms (Richer, 2008). Sino-African relations were maintained in the 1960s, and China was present at various Afro-Asian Conferences held in Africa. China's relationship with Africa changed

drastically following the opening up of China's economy initiated by Deng Xiaoping; this was a dramatic shift in policies followed under Mao. However, the official principles of engagements were among other things, including equality among partners, mutual benefit, respect for sovereignty, use of interest free grants and loans, beneficial capacity building, compliance with obligations, provision of equipment made in China and the same living conditions for both Chinses and local experts, did not change (Larkin, 1971, Champonniere, 2009). While China's political and development partnership with many African countries dates back to the 1950s (Fuchs & Rudyak, 2019), the relationship evolved dramatically with the rapid transformation of the Chinese economy, most notably since 2000 (Power & Mohan, 2010; Shinn, 2019). The growth of the Chinese economy, and the launch of the 'Going Global Strategy' inviting Chinese firms to invest abroad and diversify China's engagement with the African continent beyond aid. China is Africa's main trade partner and the continent's fourth-largest foreign investor in terms of foreign direct investment (FDI) stocks (UNCTAD, 2021). Chinese institutions provide large amounts of development finance to build Africa's infrastructure, with loan commitments estimated at US$ 153 over the period 2000-2019 (CARI and BU GDPC, 2021). Chinese contractors not only finance but also build infrastructure on the continent: In 2017, Chinese contractors worked in 54 African countries, and signed US$ 76.5 billion worth of new contracts (CHINCA, 2018). Today, China is Africa's largest trading partner and the largest source of foreign direct investment on the continent. China has also become a major player in African security, peacekeeping, and development. China's various contending engagements in Africa has had a significant impact on both Africa and China respectively. Both parties have had a fair share of their alliance depending on who bargains for a better and bigger deals. On one, china's presence in Africa has thus helped to boost economic growth and development in critical sectors, created and improved job availabilities, livelihoods, and helped in improving critical infrastructural facilities which are needed for a continent's life and survival. China's current engagements in Africa is complex, multifaceted and evolving. China is still the continent's largest trading partner, and it still continues to invest heavily in Africa's critical sectors.

Impact of China's increasing presence in Africa on Nigeria's Afro-centrism

Nigeria's establishment of diplomatic ties with China was in furtherance of efforts to promote and strengthen the objectives of the South-South Cooperation which, among other things, aimed at promoting cooperation among countries of the Southern Hemisphere in a wide range of areas such as trade, investment, technical cooperation, industrialization, energy, food and agriculture, and technology (Eze, 1986). Nigeria and China share a lot in common from ethnic diversities to rich endowment of mineral and human resources. China is the largest single market in the world with a population of 1.3 billion, while Nigeria is the largest single market in Africa with a population of 140 million. Unlike Nigeria, China has been able to harness its vast demographic, human and material resources to build a strong and virile domestic economy which has impacted positively on its citizenry (Agbu, 1994). Morgenthau (1985), labeled nations that seek to acquire more power than they currently possess as revisionist powers because they seek to alter existing power relations and achieve greater status. He warned that such revisionist powers have historically pursued imperialist policies. China's various engagements in Africa have been categorized as controversial and intended to satisfy basically Chinese interests which is often typical of any nation or interest group that wants to expand beyond its territorial boundary or present area of focus and influence and this is not out of place because these agendas and motives are usually driven by huge financial and human resources. And there has to be a return on investment which is common, natural and typically not out of place. With the rate at which China is playing critical and undertaking roles and determining Africa's future, its increasing presence on the Africa continent will continue be significant, which ultimately has reduced Nigeria's big brother role gradually. African countries no longer run to Nigeria for aid and economic support but rather have often turned to China which is the new bride of Africa for aid, economic support and development. This has further complicated Nigeria's leadership roles and support in Africa vis-à-vis its Afro-centrism.

The impact of Chinese engagements on Africa

China has been the most active in Africa, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, over the past two decades (Sutter, 2016). China's increasing presence in Africa has had some positive impacts ranging from: job creation, the development of critically needed infrastructure such as the railway system, and an increase in economic growth and developments particularly in critical sectors which international financial institutions and Western governments and companies have been unwilling to engage with overtime. Chinese engagements has also had deleterious effects: It has helped nondemocratic regimes cling to power; reinforced many African countries' dependence on raw materials and unskilled labor; contributed to the loss of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs in certain industries, such as textiles; and contributed to high levels of debt, economically unviable decisions, and official corruption as well as human rights abuses which are prevalent and under reported and unreported on many occasions and unfavorable labor laws.

The changing nature of china's relations with Africa

China's relations with Africa is drastically wearing a new look. According to Zhao (2015), China is currently regarded as one of Africa's largest partner in terms of trade and investments. In the past, China's relationship with Africa was largely focused on trade and investment. However, in recent years, China has become more involved in Africa's political and security affairs. One of the most significant changes in China's relations with Africa is its growing military presence on the continent. China has established military bases in Djibouti and Seychelles, and it has increased its arms sales in Africa. This military presence has raised concerns among some African leaders and Western countries about China's real intentions in Africa. Another change in China's relationship with Africa is its growing role in peacekeeping operations. China has sent peacekeeping troops to Sudan, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This role has helped to improve China's image in Africa and has also given China a greater say on the continent's political and security landscape. China's growing influence in Africa has also led to concerns about its impact on the continent's development. China's relations with Africa are likely to continue to grow in the coming years with the emerging of new areas of cooperation and collaborations. China's need for natural resources and its desire to expand its global influence are likely to ensure that Africa remains an important part of its growth plan as well as her foreign policy focus.

China's increasing security and peace keeping roles in Africa

In analyzing China's peace keeping and peace support operations in Africa which has been on the increase, various factors may have accounted for this: China's desire to play a more active role in international affairs which ultimately is geared towards expanding its influence and bargaining power, the continuous threats of insurgent and radical groups in Africa and because of China's growing economic trade and investments in Africa.

There are basically three forms of the Chinese military presence in Africa today: firstly, selling weapons to some African countries such as Sudan and Zimbabwe; secondly, participating in the UN peacekeeping missions in the region; and thirdly, maintaining a naval force against the Somalian pirates near the Horn of Africa (Lanteigne, 2016, Sutter 2016 & Enuka 2011). Among these three, China's involvement in UN peacekeeping is the most significant. China began to contribute personnel to the UN peacekeeping missions around the world beginning from 1992, and Africa has now become the destination for the majority of Chinese personnel stationed abroad for such missions (Lanteigne, 2016). China's military presence in Africa reached a whole new level under the rule of the current Chinese president, Xi Jinping (Sutter, 2016 & Duchatel, et. al. 2016). China, which had contributed only non-combat personnel (such as doctors and engineers) deployed its first combat troops to support the UN peacekeeping missions for South Sudan in 2012 and Mali in 2013. Additionally, the naval force against the Somalian pirates has been used to evacuate

Chinese civilians from nearby countries experiencing turmoil, such as Yemen in 2015.The latest indicator of China's expanding military presence in Africa that is attracting the most attention is the establishment of China's first military overseas outpost in Djibouti, an Eastern African country located in a strategically important point near several regional flashpoints (Lanteigne, 2016). This Chinese overseas military base is unprecedented and China refers to it as a 'logistical support and fast evacuation facility'. It will be operated for many different military purposes (Braude & Jiang, 2016, Duchatel et. al. 2016 & Orion, 2016). Securing this military base in Africa will undoubtedly increase China's military influence on the continent, and the Chinese military presence will arguably expand even further if the rumors about the proposals for more Chinese military bases in such African countries as Seychelles, Kenya, Tanzania, Namibia, Angola, and Nigeria are proved true (Duchatel, et. al. 2016). This is a further weighing down on Nigeria's security influence in Africa. Currently, Nigeria has no military base in Africa and its participation in peace keeping and peace support operations is beginning to look unsustainable owing to its domestic challenges particularly insurgent groups which have been ravaging the northeastern part of Nigeria since 2002. Nigeria had in 2013 withdrawn troops from UN missions in Mali and Sudan to beef up security in the country. Nigeria was inducted back into the UN peacekeeping mission on March 15, 2023 (Punch, 2023). Nigeria has not been able to come out of this security challenge till this present day. China in turn has been undertaking peace keeping roles in Africa which is looking sustainable.

China's increasing political influence in Africa

The expansion of China's economic presence in Africa is accompanied by the growth of its political presence on the continent. One of the major political objectives that China has been pursuing in Africa is to gain African support for its 'One-China Principle' vis-a-vis Taiwan (Wang & Zou, 2014). Due to its successful economic reform initiated in the late 1970s, China has since the 1990s begun to enjoy notable progress on its 'yuan diplomacy' to encourage Taiwan's African allies to shift their political recognition and endorse China's 'One-China Principle' (Lanteigne, 2016). As a result, China's political presence in Africa significantly expanded when South Africa terminated its official relations with Taiwan and established formal diplomatic ties with China in 1998. Today, all except three countries in Africa (Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, and Swaziland) politically recognize China instead of Taiwan. China in Africa tries to use its political influences to protect its own interests under certain circumstances. For china to secure the stability in Africa and to satisfy the expectations from other countries inside and outside Africa (both of which would serve China's interests in Africa on the long run). China in 2007 successfully persuaded the Sudanese government to voluntarily agree to allow the deployment of the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping force to its war-torn Darfur region (Holslag, 2008).

China's economic dominance in Africa

China has accomplished a remarkable feat in transforming itself from one of the poorest countries into the second-largest economy in the world in just thirty years (Borensztein & Ostry, 1996, Chow, 1993, Jefferson, Hu, and Su, 2006, Lin & Zhang, 2015, Song, Storesletten, & Zilibotti, 2011). China's expanding economic presence in Africa can be observed through the growing China-Africa trade relations. The amount of trade grew from US$10 billion to US$40 billion between 2000 and 2005, and in 2009, China became Africa's largest trading partner, surpassing the US and the European Union (EU) (Sutter, 2016). The amount reached US$220 billion in 2014 and is expected to increase to US$400 billion by 2020 (Forum, 2016). The key factor behind the growing China-Africa trade involves China's import of African oil, as well as other raw materials. Given its effort to diversify the source of energy that it needs for its economic development, China began to import oil from Africa in 1992. The quantity of African oil to China increased from 500 000 tons in that year to 708 million tons in 2010, and China today imports at least one-third of the oil that it consumes from Africa (Wang & Zou, 2014). In addition to being one of the most important sources of energy

for China, Africa is also a huge potential market for Chinese products (Wang & Zou, 2014). Increasing Chinese investment in Africa can also be noticed with the burgeoning Chinese construction projects throughout the continent where there are more and more Chinese-constructed (or at least financed) roads, railways, ports, airports, and official buildings such as the headquarters of the African Union (AU) which was funded by China with US$200 million and formally opened in 2012 (Zhao, 2014 & Lanteigne, 2016).

Future of China's increasing presence in Africa

In addressing the factors that has led to the increasing nature of china's presence in Africa, and the likely future status of this relationship, there has been a continuous growing trend of debates of African countries turning to China for economic and political support and how sustaining it will be. There are a number of reasons which has accounted for this: china is willing to partake in Africa's infrastructural development such as roads, rail, dams, etc. which Western countries shy away from, China's foreign policy of mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs and mutual non-aggression has made Africa more attracted to Chinese investments and development offers, china's growing economic power and the unlimited opportunities it offers Africa, China's loans and investment offers are more favorable and flexible to Africans to access in terms of its conditionalities and clauses. China's investment on one hand has helped to boost economic growth and created jobs in Africa. On the other hand, some African countries have become increasingly indebted to China which is a major challenge for the continent and there have been growing concerns about the environmental impacts of Chinese investments. Overall, China's role in Africa is likely to continue to grow in the coming years. China's economic and political influence in Africa has already been significant and it is likely to become even more so as China's global power influence continues to grow. The changing nature of China-Africa relations is likely to have a significant impact on the continent in the years to come. China's increasing presence in Africa is likely to reshape the continent's socio-cultural, political, security and economic landscape.

China's presence in Africa and its implications on Nigeria's longstanding relationship with United States and United Kingdom.

China's presence in Africa has in so many ways impacted Nigeria's friendship with the United States and the United Kingdom. To put it in the right perspective, China's investment in Nigeria has created new opportunities of development for trade and investment. China has now become Nigeria's largest trading partner globally through its massively invested infrastructural projects such as roads, railways, power plants and other critical national infrastructures. This has helped to boost Nigeria's economy by creating jobs. Nigeria need to balance its ties with its longstanding allies like united states and United Kingdom despite China's growing influence in Africa vis-a-viz Nigeria. The likely areas of concentration for Nigeria and its continued relationship with China vis-a-viz united states and united kingdom would be that: Nigeria needs to balance its economic and security interests with china, united states and united kingdom since no ally is indispensable as far as international relations is concerned, Nigeria needs to ensure that Chinese investments yield the utmost desired result, Nigeria should not be over dependent on china because an alliance can change or fail. In furtherance of Nigeria's economic relationship with China, the aftermath effects on United States and the United Kingdom relationships are: it will lead to an increased in competition for trade and investments, it will lead to reduction in economic aid to Nigeria and with the huge debt owed by Nigeria, it will make Nigeria vulnerable to china's influence to the detriment of united states and United Kingdom thereby creating tension and uncertainties.

African's perception of china's growing presence on its continent

African leaders and governments generally portray Chinese engagements on the continent as being fruitful and achieving the desired goals. Some Africans and critical stakeholders believe that China's African investment, aid, and policies have negative effects while on the other hand, some conclude that China's African policy, investment, and aid have had a positive effect on the lives of the people. Particularly in regard to the impacts Chinese activities have a considerable and lasting footprint on the African economy (Chemingui & Bchir, 2010, Elu & Price, 2010, Wang, 2010). There are also many positive aspects of China's engagements with Africa, such as the boost to economic growth and the creation of jobs, it has helped to build infrastructure and develop natural resources, china's presence in Africa has led to an increased in skill development in Africa, particularly through programs such as the China-Africa Capacity Building Partnerships which has helped to train African professionals in a variety of fields, including engineering, technology, and healthcare, debt relief to a number of African countries, which has helped to reduce their debt profiles.

Nigeria's leadership roles in Africa and the challenges posed by china

Nigeria has been a strong supporter of regional cooperation and integration in Africa particularly through the various integrative agencies. Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has continued to play more strategic roles in global and continental peace through her foreign policy framework and principles, which defines Nigeria's relations with other countries particularly in Africa. Nigeria has over the years designed and adopted series of strategies to safeguard her national interest and to achieve set goals in international relations. These strategies are diverse and range from humanitarian/altruistic-driven, diplomacy, economic actions (such as providing financial assistance to other countries) trade restrictions to political and military assistance (Clinton, 2001). Nigeria's foreign policy thrust over the years is anchored on Africa by playing the 'big brother' role in her international engagements. However, Nigeria's dominance on African affairs is beginning to be challenged by the rise of China. Morgenthau (1985), identified nine elements of national power: geography, natural resources, industrial capacity, military preparedness, population, national character, national morale, the quality of diplomacy and the quality of government. The historical trajectory of Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy is rooted in the philosophies of brotherhood ideology and African socialism. As Ola (2017), noted it is an appreciation of the enormous challenges which destiny inadvertently confers on the shoulders of Nigeria at independence. According to him, making Africa the centerpiece of Nigeria's foreign policy connotes that the country would perform acts of benevolence, kindness and sacrifices geared towards the general good of Africa. The first indication that God naturally ordained Nigeria to lead Africa emerged on October 7th 1960 when Sir Balewa addressed the United Nations General Assembly as follows: 'We in Nigeria appreciate the advantages which the size of our country and its population gives us, but we have absolutely no aggressive intentions. We shall never impose ourselves on any other country and shall treat every African territory, big or small, as our equal because we honestly believe that it is on the basis of equality that peace can be maintained on the continent' (Idang, 1973). We are independent in everything, but neutral in nothing that affects the destiny of Africa (Ogele & Okutalukwe, 2020). We shall use three programs to show the Nigerian state to her Afrocentric foreign policy, namely anti-colonial struggle, directorate of technical aid corps program, formation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the ECOMOG intervention in conflicts in Africa. China has been rapidly expanding its economic and political influence in Africa in recent years. China is now Nigeria and Africa's largest trading partner and has been investing heavily in infrastructure, natural resources, and manufacturing on the continent. China is gradually displacing Nigeria as the dominant power block in Africa China has become a major economic power in Africa and investing heavily in infrastructural projects. Meaning Nigeria cannot provide the much needed economic, political as well as security leadership it was once known for within the continent. Scholars and respondents have been quite unanimous in adducing reasons for Nigeria's waning regional influence leadership failure, corruption, weak economic structures, ethnic and sectarian crisis,

infrastructure decay and so on have made Nigeria an object of ridicule in the international circles, eclipsing her erstwhile appreciable image (Ade-Ibijola, 2005; Folarin, 2013; Jega, 2010; Mbara, 2019 & Warner, 2017). Nigeria adopted an Afro-centric foreign policy posture by virtue of her resources, population, size cultural influence and strategic location. But unfortunately, these defining assets and elements of strength that once characterized Nigeria's influence have now become a shadow of themselves. These sources of national power that gave Nigeria that much needed respect in Africa have indeed become a source of challenge and therefore Nigeria can no longer provide the much-needed leadership that Africa currently lacks. Therefore, features that has characterized Nigeria's afro-centrism from independence to date are fading away gradually. However, if Nigeria is able to address these daunting challenges, Nigeria can still regain its foremost leadership roles in African affairs which she urgently needs to remain as a leading force and voice in African as well as global affairs. key concerns surrounding Nigeria's Afrocentrism due to the increasing presence of China on the African scene as visible in many related areas of needs: China's increasing presence in Africa has further heightened a renewed competition between the United States and United Kingdom for influence on the continent due to Nigeria's incapacitation, there is the need for Nigeria to balance its economic interests with its commitment to Africa's development, how Nigeria challenges China exploitation of Africa's resources and China's approach to Africa's sustainable development.

Findings

The paper came up with the following findings:

(a) China's increasing presence in Africa is driven by the economic desire to gain access to Africa's natural resources, market, labor, economy, political power, to promote its cultural values (soft power diplomacy) as well as the positive reactions from African states to China's new rapprochement.

(b) The paper also found out that the new found interest from China has helped some African states to boost their economic growth and development, create jobs, build infrastructure and develop natural resources including skills development initiatives through programs such as the China-Africa Capacity Building Partnerships (CABCP) which has helped to train African professionals in a variety of fields such as agriculture, energy, finance, education, infrastructure, information and communication technology, public administration, science and technology, healthcare etc.

(c) One of the major findings of the paper is that China's increasing presence in Africa has the potential to dwarf Nigeria's regional and global bargaining power, given China's high economic, aid, security and technological investments which it offers Africa, including Nigeria, vis-a-vis Nigeria's declining capacity to render the much-needed help to its counterparts in Africa.

Conclusions

Like every other country on the continent of Africa that China has one relationship or the other with, Nigeria is also not exempted and there are divergent views about the true nature of this new-found relationship. Coupled with her numerous challenges, there is little that Nigeria can do in order to match china's influence in Africa. According to Taylor (2011), in the year 2000 the Chinese government established the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). The aim of this mechanism was to further stimulate and strengthen China-Africa partnerships (economically, politically and infrastructurally). FOCAC aims to forge cooperation between African and China through the South-South cooperation and to further promote China's long-term plans for Africa's development. Some critics argue that China is exploiting Africa's resources and labor, and that it is not doing enough to promote African development. There is also the growing perception that China's growing influence in Africa has undermined Nigeria's cultural identity and its commitment to pan-Africanism. For Nigeria to regain its pride of place in African affairs, there is an urgent need to address the various challenges facing the country. The future of Nigeria's dominance in African affairs looks bleak due to the various internal domestic uncertainties. According to Zabadi (2011),

even though the world treats Nigeria as a regional and sub-regional leader and listens to her opinion on African and world issues, there is a contradiction, because Nigeria is an underperformer on domestic affairs, with poor representation in international fora and poorly coordinated positions on many issues. However, if Nigeria can address its challenges and capitalize on its strengths, it is still well-positioned to remain a leading force in Africa for many years to come. In addition to the challenges mentioned above, Nigeria also faces competition from other African countries, such as South Africa and Ethiopia. These countries have thriving economies with strong political influence in Africa.

Recommendations

The paper recommends that:

(a) Since china's increasing presence in Africa is as a result of the enormous natural resources, available markets, labor and infrastructural deficits, there is need for African countries to strengthen the capacities of their institutions to promote transparency and accountability in their dealings with Chinese companies and government.

(b) There is need for African states to improve on their economic, security and political participation. Given that China's presence on the continent has been viewed as positive, African states should closely monitor China's investments and interests as well as the legal implication of any alliance.

(c) In view of the fact that China's increasing presence in Africa has had a number of effects on Nigeria's Afro-centrism, Nigeria must tackle its internal challenges by improving security, fight corruption, reduce poverty, diversify the economy for better performance, improve infrastructural deficits and invest more in human capital development as well as promote democracy and good governance.

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