

ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MEMORANDA
SIGNED BY PRESIDENT BOLA AHMED TINUBU DURING HIS STATE
VISIT TO BEIJING AND THE 9th FOCAC SUMMIT

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Abstract

This paper is an Assessment of the Implementation of the Memoranda Signed by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu during his State Visit to Beijing on Tuesday September 3, 2024; MOUs in five key areas of mutual interest: (i) Cooperation plan between Nigeria and China on jointly promoting the Belt and Road Initiative; (ii) Cooperation in the peaceful application of Nuclear Energy; (iii) Strengthening cooperation on Human Resource Development under the Global Development Initiative; (iv) Media Exchange and Cooperation; and (v) Memorandum of Understanding between China Media Group and the Nigerian Television Authority; at which occasion President Xi remarked that the two countries have 'found the path of seeking collective strength, through unity, and "win-win" cooperation.' This paper used a secondary method of data collection, relying on review of online articles, radio and television programmes, magazines, newspapers' reports, etc. Critical theory of the Frankfurt School popularized by Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno (nee Wiesengrund), Herbert Marcuse, et al in the 1930s, which analyzed the impact of capitalism, technology, and monopolies on society, was anchored on as theoretical framework. This assessment looked critically at the incursion of China into Nigeria in comparison with the surreptitious infiltration of Africa by the West, which eventually culminated into several decades of colonialism, reiterating that China's coupling with Nigeria through the new 'strategic partnership and win-win cooperation' may portend more benefits. Although, as the Abuja Think-Tanks' declaration advanced four key areas (President Xi's proposals on Agricultural modernization, industrialization for Africa, scientific and technical education development, lasting security architecture) Nigeria should leverage on in the implementation of the CSP. This paper, however, in line with the submission of the Frankfurt School, and in agreement with Soludo's position, among its recommendations, suggests that we look inwards in order to find solutions to our developmental challenges, as looking outside for succor may be a mere mirage eventually.

Key Words: development; development cooperation; FOCAC; strategic partnership; comprehensive strategic partnership

Introduction

Globalization, no doubt, has turned the entire globe into one huge market every nation, organization or even individuals rush to for transactional agreements, partnership or cooperation, etc. The talk of common market, unified currency exchange (or even the recently evolved (strange) currency swap), free trade cum common tariff, visa-free or visa on arrival movement of citizens, etc. headline discuss among countries in efforts to participate in the global competitiveness trending the world over. Nigeria is not left out of this global transactional drive or pursuit. Successive governments, especially the ones in this forth republic, made international cooperation aimed at maximizing the tenets of globalization, by ways of trade liberalization, increase export coupled with valued chain addition, foreign direct investment (FDI), and what have you, a pivotal priority. The current President Bola Ahmed Tinubu leadership is not exempted. The significance his government attached to the quest for improved, enlarged and profitable global transactional relations has taken him to a number of countries within Africa and the wider world in the one year and five months that he came into the saddle. It is in the same vein that he visited Beijing in early September 2024 for meaningful talk on comprehensive bilateral relations with his Chinese counterpart, President Xi Ping, leading to the signing of MOUs in key crucial areas such as Belt and Road Initiative, nuclear energy cooperation, human resource development, and media exchange, etc. which formed the basis for this assessment.

To underscore the importance of these agreements (on various areas of mutual interest), Nigeria issued a press release stressing the significance of the ‘strategic partnership between Nigeria and China’, thereby laying the ‘groundwork for collaboration across various sectors’ (Ajuri, 2024 in Obiowo, 2024), a development both leaders agreed is a ‘win-win’ situation (President Tinubu was quoted as conveying similar message to France and Denmark when he received Letters of Credence from their respective ambassadors to Nigeria few days ago, according to newspapers report of November 1, 2024). But looking at the turn-outs of China’s so-called partnership in other climes, especially in Africa, and just recently the unenviable arm-twisting antics of Chinese entity by way of seizure of two of Nigeria’s presidential aircrafts through court judgments against the Nigerian state over alleged contract cancellation, calls for grave concern, and the need for Nigerian government to exercise very cautious optimism as there may be hideous plan(s) behind China’s offer of cooperation and partnership, as the findings of this paper indicated in its later part.

Materials and Method

This paper used a secondary method of data collection, relying on review of online articles, radio and television programmes focused on the subject-matter, magazines, newspapers’ report, etc.; thus provided ample information that the writer based his analysis upon, using narrative/descriptive method for a simplified easy to read work.

Literature Review

Although the topic clearly indicates area of focus, it suffices at this juncture to clarify one or two technical terms used in this work.

Memoranda is the plural form of the term memorandum, meaning position paper in its everyday usage. Memoranda as used in this study infer the various position papers or agreements

indicating the positions of both China and Nigeria on specific areas of cooperation and partnership signed by authorized officials of both countries in order to give them authentication and right of enforcement.

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a strategy initiated by the People's Republic of China that seeks to connect Asia with Africa and Europe via land and maritime networks with the aim of improving regional integration, increasing trade and stimulating economic growth. The China Development Bank (CDB) and Exim Bank of China are the major financing sources for the BRI, together with support from the other four big state-owned commercial banks, in particular the Bank of China and the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC). Nigeria initially signed the Belt and Road cooperation agreement with China in 2018.

The **Enlightenment** refers to a movement in Europe from about 1650 until 1800 that advocated the use of reason and individualism instead of tradition and established doctrine.

Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP): It is noteworthy that China has entered into 'Strategic Partnership' agreement with every participating African country at FOCAC. But during the state visit of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to Beijing prior to the FOCAC 2024 summit, both President Xi and Tinubu decided to upgrade the strategic partnership between the two countries to 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership', Nigeria being the only African country under FOCAC with such. The key word, COMPREHENSIVE, is indicative of the broadness of the strategic partnership; it is all-inclusive, all-embracing, covers all facets or areas of cooperation (Ajuri, 2024; Ibrahim, 2024).

A look at the Memoranda Signed by PBAT during his State Visit to Beijing

The memoranda signed by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (PBAT) on 3rd September 2024 during his state visit to Beijing covers five broad perspectives, or key areas of mutual interest: (i) Cooperation plan between Nigeria and China on jointly promoting the Belt and Road Initiative; (ii) Cooperation in the peaceful application of Nuclear Energy; (iii) Strengthening cooperation on Human Resource Development under the Global Development Initiative; (iv) Media Exchange and Cooperation; and (v) Memorandum of Understanding between China Media Group and the Nigerian Television Authority. Looking at the signed memoranda more closely, joint statement on the establishment of the CSP by officials of both countries highlights twenty areas of mutual benefits put under four broad headlines, to be focused on (Ibrahim, 2024; Zhal, 2024; State Council of China, 2024), as adopted below:

1. Building high-level Strategic Mutual Trust to: (a) bolster over half a century diplomatic ties and cooperation; (b) reaffirm their firm support to each other on issues related to their respective core interests and major concerns (like the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Tinubu government, the one-China principle, etc.); (c) recognition of the leading role by China through FOCAC in the advancement of Africa via joint effort to building a high-level China-Africa Community with a Shared Future and Action Plan; (d) reiterate firm support to each other in independently seeking a development path that suits their national interest that will further strengthen exchanges on experiences of result-oriented, developmental-prioritized governance; (e) the setting up of overall planning, coordinating and driving Intergovernmental Committee and its sub-committees

saddled with coordination role, convening of plenary sessions, etc.; (f) applaud and support for the vision of Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Global Development Initiative (GDI), the Global Security Initiative (GSI), the Global Civilisation Initiative (GCI) proposed by President Xi, as well as support for each other's efforts in multilateral affairs (like in the UN, the G20, BRICS, calls for the enlargement of the UN Security Council permanent membership to include African member state, opposition to politicization of human right vis-a-viz interference in other countries' internal issues under the pretext of human rights, etc.); and (g) appreciate the efforts of Nigeria in enhancing regional peace and solidarity, promotion of regional integration, addressing differences through friendly dialogue and consultations, etc.

2. Enhancing High-Level Cooperation for Development: through (h) cooperation plan between the two countries to jointly promote the Belt and Road Initiative and FOCAC Conference outcomes, especially as apply to Renewed Hope Agenda and the Eight Priority Agenda of the Nigerian Government; (i) expansion of trade between the two countries platforms such as the China International Import Expo (CIIE), the China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo (CAETE), China Import and Export Fair (the Canton Fair), Lagos and Abuja International Trade Fairs, the Annual Nigerian Mining Week and through new channels like e-commerce and overseas warehouses in China, as well as China's support for massive importation of quality products from Nigeria into its market; while Nigeria seeks China's support for the development of its energy and mineral resources, just as it wants Chinese companies to set plants in Nigeria, while others invest in Nigeria to help drive its diversification quest; (j) the opportunities of developing productive capacity to deepen overall reform, jointly explore cooperation in areas like digital economy, green development, blue economy and agricultural modernization, fosters new growth drivers in cooperation, welcomes the Global Initiative for Artificial Intelligence (AI), Governance and Global Initiative on Data Security proposed by China as well as other efforts or initiatives in promoting the right of developing countries in artificial intelligence; (k) deepening cooperation on infrastructure connectivity between the countries (in the areas of transportation, ports, free trade zones, Nigeria's flagship projects on cross-national and cross-regional cooperation) towards achieving integrated development and connectivity for industries; (l) encouraging flexible and diverse regional and monetary and financial cooperation like the local currency swaps to facilitate trade between China and Nigeria and also make contributions to global financial stability, as well international cooperation on financial intelligence on anti-money laundering/ countering the financing of terrorism(AML/CFT) support for Nigeria's efforts to safeguard the order of financial and foreign exchange markets and to crack down on financial crimes, including money laundering; (m) supporting the WTO focused multilateral trading system, oppose trade protectionism, promote trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, create a transparent and non-discriminatory business environment for cooperation the two countries, as well as establishment of more friendly relations between Chinese and Nigerian provinces/states and municipalities with a view to expand and deepen cooperation at the sub-national level; (n) stepping up protection of lawful rights and interests of each other's citizens on their territories and create a favorable business environment for each other's companies.

3. Strengthening High-Level Mutual Assistance on Security: by (o) strengthening coordination and cooperation in multilateral affairs and jointly uphold the international system with the UN at its core, the international order underpinned by international law and the basic norms governing international relations guided by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, as well as advocating an equal and orderly multi-polar world and universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization and jointly uphold peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom, the common values of humanity and commit to a new approach to international relations focusing on win-win cooperation; (p) China supporting Nigeria's leading in ECOWAS and its efforts towards bringing stability to the region, taking the lead in the fight against terrorism and managing differences, to safeguard peace, security and stability in the region, including the Sahel and Gulf of Guinea; (q) China supporting Nigeria in its capacity building, such as upgrading its science and technology for its military equipment and intelligence gathering expertise, to respond more effectively to traditional and non-traditional security challenges at home and abroad, at regional and international levels, as well as strengthens exchanges and cooperation between security agencies to enhance their capacity to safeguard national sovereignty and security interests and make joint efforts to maintain regional and world peace.
4. Promoting High-Level Mutual Learning: through (r) fruitful cooperation in the areas of culture, tourism, education, youth, media, sport, and explore the advantages of respective diversified cultures and ancient histories, and through mutual exchanges, mutual learning, mutual understanding continue to enhance the bond and friendship between the two peoples as well as promote mutual trust, interest sharing and common progress; (s) willingness to continue to build cultural brands such as the Happy Chinese New Year, China-Nigeria Culture Week, China-Nigeria Film Festival and Abuja International Art Fair, strengthen mutual visits and exchanges between art groups and personnel, promote human resources training in the fields of creative culture, strengthen cooperation in culture and tourism such as publishing, film and television production, cultural heritage, libraries, museums and tourism promotion, etc.

The agreement by the two leaders on all of these culminated in the signing of the now referred to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP).

Implementation of the China-Nigeria Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP)

Towards the implementation of the CSP, the President (Bola Tinubu) appointed Mr Joseph Olasunkanmi Tegbe (a 1988 first-class graduate in Civil Engineering from Obafemi Awolowo University and fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria and the Chartered Institute of Taxation of Nigeria) as the Director-General and global liaison for the Nigeria-China strategic partnership, to oversee the day-to-day operations, engage continuously with Chinese counterparts, and ensure all deliverables are aligned with national development goals. He was also to outline specific deliverables, timeliness, and key performance indicators for each area of cooperation, including priority projects, projected investments, and expected

socio-economic outcomes (Ajisafe, 2024); Elumoye, 2024; Channels TV news, 2024; Premium Times Agency Report, 2024; Martins, 2024; Daka, 2924; Ugwu, 2024, Agbakwuru, 2024).

The implementation team led by Mr Tegbe (who is to report directly to the President) is to leverage specific pledge by President Xi, for instance, the promise of 360 billion yuan (about 51 billion dollars) in new financing for African nations over the next three years; support for 30 infrastructural projects aimed at enhancing connectivity across the continent and creating one million jobs; commitment to support Nigeria's economic diversification, infrastructure development, technology transfer, and job creation, expansion of Nigeria's rail network, upgrading power distribution, and creation of new industrial parks (Ajisafe, 2024); Elumoye, 2024; Martins, 2024; Daka, 2924; Ugwu, 2024, Agbakwuru, 2024).

The team is to harness agreement by Nigeria and China to establish hospital alliances, collaborate on medical research, and deployment of Chinese healthcare professionals to strengthen Nigeria's healthcare system; partnership on vocational training, Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education, academic exchanges with joint initiatives to establish engineering technology academies and provide scholarships for Nigerian youth to acquire modern workforce skills, improve Nigeria's agricultural practices through knowledge sharing, technology transfer, and investment in sustainable farming techniques (Elumoye, 2024; Channels TV news, 2024; Martins, 2024; Daka, 2924; Ugwu, 2024, Agbakwuru, 2024).

Still on the implementation of the CSP, a group which is an amalgam of policy makers, diplomatic representatives, civil society organisations, Think-Tanks in the academia and other leaders of thought put forth a kind of guidelines it referred to as **Abuja Declaration or Consensus**; in which it agrees to the fact that the implementation of China-Nigeria Comprehensive Strategic Partnership should focus and take priority on the following areas, among others as the first phase of the implementation (Ibrahim, 2024; Sanni, 2024; Zhag, 2024):

- i. Nigeria to key in on President Xi's proposal on Agricultural modernization for Africa, by ensuring immediate commencement from the forthcoming rainy season, as this will help guarantee the very essential food security Nigeria needs now.
- ii. On President Xi's proposal on industrialization for Africa, Nigeria should with immediate effect, request for co-production of industrial machines such as in textiles, packaging, food processing, assembly plants for automobile parts and vehicles, rubber processing, manufacturing plants for building materials, etc. to guarantee industrial take-off for both domestic and export economies - China, as one of the world's largest economies and a global leader in technology and innovation, is to offer valuable expertise and resources that can support Nigeria's development goals while on the other hand, Nigeria as the largest economy in Africa and a key player on the continent, presents numerous opportunities for Chinese businesses and investors looking to expand their presence in Africa.
- iii. Nigeria and China should consolidate efforts in scientific and technical education, set aside pilot strategy of at least 10,000 Nigerians into divergent technical and scientific knowledge areas such as Medicine, Pharmacy, Engineering, Agriculture, Industrial Technology, Aviation, etc. with immediate launching of vocational and skill-acquisition centers across Nigeria.

- iv. In addition to economic and cultural cooperation, the China-Nigeria Comprehensive Strategic Partnership which also encompasses collaboration on regional and global issues of common concern by both upholding commitment to multilateralism, promoting peace and security, and addressing global challenges such as climate change, terrorism, and pandemics; by working together within the framework of FOCAC and other international platforms - Through security cooperation, the two sides should work together to design a pathway to Nigeria's lasting security architecture, with intelligence sharing, surveillance, satellite provision and launching, and provision of military technology and hardware to bring an end to the incessant security challenges of the country.
- v. China's Belt and Road Initiative, which aims to promote connectivity and cooperation among countries along the ancient Silk Road routes, presents a unique opportunity for Nigeria to access funding and expertise for critical infrastructure projects. Furthermore, the Nigeria-China partnership and cooperation should include cultural and people-to people exchanges, as both countries have a rich cultural heritage and a diverse population, and there is much to be gained from promoting greater understanding and cooperation between our peoples; thus initiatives such as student exchange programs, cultural festivals, and language training can help foster closer ties and deepen mutual respect and appreciation,

Potential Challenges and Risks of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership

While Chinese investments can bring significant benefits to Nigeria's infrastructure development, there are also potential challenges and risks associated with a heavy reliance on such investments. It is important to consider these factors to ensure that the partnership between China and Nigeria is balanced, sustainable, and mutually beneficial. Here are some potential challenges and risks (Sanni, 2024):

1. Debt Sustainability: One of the primary concerns associated with heavy reliance on Chinese investments is the risk of debt accumulation. Large infrastructure projects funded by Chinese loans may lead to a significant increase in Nigeria's external debt burden, potentially straining the country's finances and raising concerns about debt sustainability.

Table 1: Showing how much Nigeria owes countries as at December 2023

Countries	June 2023	December 2023	Changes under Tinubu
China	\$4.72 billion	\$5.16 billion	\$440 million
France	\$572.61 million	\$580.13 million	\$7.52 million
Japan	\$67.18 million	\$58.33 million	\$1.15 million
India	\$26.64 million	\$25.94 million	\$0.70 million
Germany	\$135.26 million	\$125.90 million	\$9.36 million

Source: Debt Management Office Report, Dec. 2023

It is essential to carefully manage debt levels and ensure that investments are economically viable and generate sufficient returns to repay the loans. Nigeria's public debt stock which includes external and domestic stood at N121.6 Trillion (USD91.6Billion) in Q1 2024 from N97.34 Trillion USD108.6Billion) in Q4 2023 indicating a growth rate of 24.99% quarterly.

Nigeria's bilateral debt obligations as of December 2023 according to the Debt Management Office indicated that Nigeria's debt obligations to China increased by almost half a billion dollars in the second half of last year to \$5.16 billion; latest data released by the Nigerian Debt Management Office (DMO), as at 26th March, 2024 showed an alarming increase from the second half of 2023's figure...In fact, a news source has it that Nigeria's debt to IDA (International Development Association, affiliated to the World Bank) is about 17 billion dollars as at September 30, 2024 (Channels TV News, 2024), and we all know that the bulk of this indebtedness is to China.

2. Transparency and Governance: Chinese investments in infrastructure projects may sometimes lack transparency and accountability, raising concerns about governance standards and potential corruption risks. It is crucial for Nigeria to ensure that investments are made through transparent processes, adhere to international best practices, and are subject to rigorous oversight and accountability mechanisms to prevent misuse of funds and ensure the efficient use of resources.
3. Local Content and Employment: Chinese investments in infrastructure projects may sometimes prioritize the use of Chinese labor, materials, and equipment, potentially limiting the opportunities for local content development and employment generation in Nigeria. It is important for Nigeria to negotiate agreements that promote the transfer of skills, technology, and knowledge to the local workforce and ensure that investments contribute to building local capacity and creating sustainable jobs
4. Environmental and Social Impacts: Large-scale infrastructure projects funded by Chinese investments may have significant environmental and social impacts, including deforestation, land degradation, displacement of communities, and disruption of ecosystems. It is essential for Nigeria to conduct thorough environmental and social impact assessments, adhere to international standards and regulations, and implement mitigation measures to minimize adverse effects on the environment and local communities.
5. Dependency and Sovereignty: Heavy reliance on Chinese investments for infrastructure development may create a sense of dependency on China and raise concerns about sovereignty and control over critical infrastructure assets. Nigeria should diversify its sources of funding and partnerships to reduce dependency risks and maintain its autonomy in decision-making and project implementation.
6. Geopolitical Considerations: Chinese investments in infrastructure projects may be influenced by geopolitical considerations and strategic interests, which could impact Nigeria's foreign policy and international relations. It is important for Nigeria to carefully assess the geopolitical implications of Chinese investments and ensure that they align with the country's national interests and long-term development goals.

Theoretical Framework

The assessment of the implementation of the memoranda signed by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu during his state visit to Beijing is viewed with the lens of **Frankfurt School** theory which is a major offshoot of the Critical Theory which was advanced and developed in the 1930s mostly by scholars at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, Germany (founded in 1923). The Frankfurt School not only sought to free those oppressed through cultural, economic, and political structures but also sought to free philosophical theory from the chains of

oppressive ideologies (Smith et al, 2022). The Frankfurt School theorists posited that knowledge did not consist of absolute 'facts' but instead an awareness of the structures of our social world that shape what we believe to be facts (Corradetti, 2021). While many philosophical systems revolved around abstract ideas made popular by the Enlightenment, the critical theory developed by the Frankfurt School attempted to engage the world as it was and not as philosophical frameworks painted it to be. The theorists of the Frankfurt School asserted that philosophical ideas are not abstract concepts; rather, the ideas that structure the world as we live in it are the result of social, political, cultural, and religious forces and are therefore lived issues. Moreover, to the degree that these forces oppressive, so are the accepted beliefs or knowledge generated by these forces. The purpose of true knowledge is thus to inform us on how the social world can be liberated from marginalizing and oppressive concepts (Corradetti, 2021).

The Frankfurt scholars imbibed a weird life style that portrayed them as radicals, perhaps to reflect their hardline belief, which was a sharp contrast to what capitalism stood for. They were of the belief that the communication system, the media, even the educational system are used by the West, as instruments of autocratic leadership and anti-democratic; whereas on the contrary the West go about preaching so-called democratic values; freedom of everything. But the Frankfurt School scholars like Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno (nee Wiesengrund), Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin, Erich Fromm, Leo Lowenthal and Friedrich Pollock believed that the media (Western) is structured to condition everyone into understanding something that makes you forget or overlook the reality – The educational system, the knowledge dispensed, is being structured to condition the targeted populace to forget about the reality of life, in order to look at what the capitalist projects for or before you (Smith, 2022; Ibrahim, 2024).

The Frankfurt School argued that 'television, popular music, and the mass media deluded working class people into accepting a subordinate, degrading role in society,,,(The reason why) existing social theory was unable to explain the turbulent political factionalism and reactionary politics, such as Nazism, of twentieth-century liberalism' (Smith, et al, 2022; Celikates, 2023). The scholars of the Frankfurt School therefore aimed at inspiring individuals to develop their intellect, creativity and character to become independent, adaptable, socially responsible and internationally minded citizen, by ensuring a dynamic, inquiry-driven education of the highest standard (Celikates, 2023)). So, the Frankfurt School is of the belief that International Capitalism (i. e. USA and allies) use democracy and freedom as weapon to perpetuate interdependence (or should it be 'dependence' on them by others). That is, both liberalism and realism, the traditional theories of international relations, pretend to allow free trade, sort of inter-dependence - 'I give you what you do not have, you give me what I do not have' – we cooperate together, only that in this kind of transactions, there are gainers and there losers (Ibrahim, 2024). The Frankfurt School posited that Critical theory or approach believed that western media are set up to tune or turn our minds toward understanding basics of Western Capitalist agenda in order to be oblivious of the reality of life – All the apps we make use of, which we devote so much man hours to, is to condition us to capitalist products, to make us to appreciate and enjoy what capitalism offers to the detriment and neglect of other important aspects of life, that may be helpful or beneficial. This is the stand of the Frankfurt School (Smith, et al, 2022; Celikates, 2023).

By way of application, the line of thought by the Frankfurt School is saying to us, be weary of the calm, pious men of Chinese leaders, urging us to engage with them as partners, because we are miles apart from each other, it amounts to self-delusion to think we can form partnership in ‘gainer-loser’ contraption; don’t be carried away by Chinese ‘goodie-goodie’ (in the form of setting up cultural exchange programmes in schools all over the country, setting up isolated primary institution in some obscure places to exhibit their generosity, setting up of cultural centres to teach Chinese language, norms, customs and life-style, etc.) because that’s how the West clandestinely gained in-road to us and ended up making us slaves for centuries; ‘Naija shine ya eyes’ because China aren’t going to transfer any technology to you, they are after positioning themselves as the ‘new colonialists’ in a subtle, subterranean, innocuous manner and by the time you realize, they have gained control of everything (as happenings in some African countries in recent time have shown, and as the internationally humiliating seizure of our presidential aircrafts and other iconic national assets overseas couple of weeks ago have proven). One can go on and on, The Frankfurt School is advising us to instead look inward, and we would discover that we have more than enough potentials to attain whatever height of developmental strides we aim at, without mortgaging our collective patrimony to sheer socio-economic ‘gerrymandering’ and disguised deception of the Chinese, they refer to as partnership agreement.

Findings and Discussions

This study dissects the various provisos of the CSP vis-à-vis the reality of how things work in the country. **Building high level strategic mutual trust** is no doubt a herculean task to achieve, based on antecedents of serious trust deficit where dealings with China is concerned. This is more pertinent considering the volume of transactional relationships between Chinese and Nigerian entities. There have been established allegations of all sorts against Chinese entities that portends grave danger where issue of trust is concerned. These range from trade, contract, labour, etc issues. Key issue of corner-cutting, unwholesome sharp practices against Chinese entities calls for grave concern. Policy allowing production of sub-standard products for ‘exports’ only; lack of respect for principle of reciprocity (i.e. Chinese not suitably qualified or persons of questionable characters (or as the grapevine has it that in some cases, prison inmates) are ‘smuggled’ in aided and abetted by locals to take strategic jobs illegally (illegal in the sense that Nigeria Labour Laws prohibits the engagement of foreigners for jobs Nigerians are eminently qualified to carry out; illegal also because such sharp practice is in contravention of relevant portions of our extant laws, the Local Content Act).

It is common knowledge that under no circumstance will such anomalies afore-mentioned be allowed by China on its soil. Today, Chinese engage in all sorts of enterprise, including retailing of consumables at our local communities and marketing, including hawking from one office to another in Nigeria, whereas such are inconceivably ‘no-go’ areas for Nigerians who are resident in China. Chinese citizens have been caught severally who engaged in all manners of satanic practices of packaging fire-place ashes as drug capsules, brownish substances as well-known branded beverages, injecting banned harmful chemicals into frozen chickens to increase their size and for preservation, packaging of artificial materials as frozen fishes, and so on (Ojioye, 2017; Consumer Life, 2016). Reports have it Chinese Government often claim ignorance of

such atrocious practices by entities of Chinese extractions but is discernable that such are mere face-saving talk (Olugbode, 2022).

High level cooperation for development is another area that raises serious doubt. Analysts are of the belief that Nigeria would be living in a fool's paradise, if it banks on China to help it achieve the much needed development; industrialization, technological transfer, etc. Governor Soludo at a recent investment summit organized by the Abuja Investment Company Limited urged Nigeria and Nigerian to come to terms with the bitter truth; only Nigerians can develop Nigeria, because investors are not just interested in what they are told but what wooing country does – the ease of doing business, not propaganda, saying 'investment don't happen in a vacuum' (Soludo, 2024). The governor said we should look inwards for solutions to our developmental challenges. He illustrated with the fact that certain 'mega trends' in the world today (and Nigeria inclusive) are driving investment decisions and directions.

Table 2: Showing global trends that are shaping the future of investment.

Demographic shift and Urbanization	Technological Advancement	Climate Change	Geo-political Development
Demographic shifts such as ageing population and urbanization, are influencing investment trends. Over the next 30+ years' population growth will be highest and people are expected to move into cities across the globe.	Digital is transforming the industries we operate in and blurring the boundaries between.	Environmental concerns and the transition to a low carbon economy are driving sustainability and impact investment strategies.	Trade dynamics and regulatory changes are further shaping global investment landscapes, influencing decisions related to international markets and cross-border investments.

Source: Soludo (2024)

He explained that there's the demographic shift and urbanization such as ageing population, particularly in Europe and North America, which offers ample opportunity to Africa, especially Nigeria, the largest of them all with the most youthful population, if we can get our acts together to be able to supply them the needed labour force. He equally illustrated the various implications of these mega trends in terms of capital flow that Nigeria can take advantage of.

Table 3: Showing implications of the mega trends on capital flow

Demographic shift and Urbanization	Influencing investment flows into healthcare, senior living facilities and urban infrastructures
Technological Advancement	Investing in technologically related areas – artificial intelligence, automation, renewable energy digital infrastructure.
Climate Change	Driving investments towards sustainable and green initiatives, impacting flows into renewable energy, clean technology, and eco-friendly practices.
Geopolitical Development	Influencing investments flow by affecting trade relationship, market access and regulatory environments, leading to shifts in capital allocations across regions.

Source: Soludo (2024)

According to Governor Soludo, the whole point is that there are dynamics globally that are affecting (and will continue to affect even in years to come) how global investments will go – Effects in terms of funds flow, interest rates, foreign exchange, inflation rates, as well as factors drawing portfolio flows and long term capitals across the world and into Nigeria in particular. He said further that the position Nigeria occupies today in terms of inflation, interest rates regime, elicited real returns on capital, and how all these affect flow of funds to the economy must be taken cognizance of, because when we're asking foreigners to come and invest, there's need to understand the mix of what drive investment, since investors borrow money to invest, and such borrowings are at some cost. For example, if somebody is going to borrow at 30 percent, he wants to know what the rate of return on investment as that is among the factors that will propel such borrowing in the first place - So, the one wooing investor must done the mathematics, forecast, putting himself in the picture, as 'these are all contexts of realism' (Soludo, 2024).

He added that the flows of FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) across the world is mainly towards Asia, Africa only receive meager four percent of it last year (2023); and Nigeria in terms of flow of both portfolio and FDI is 'punching way below its weight', whether relative to the its population or the size of its economy in Africa or globally, 'we are is punching way-way below our weight' (Soludo, 2024). He reiterated that Nigeria has been struggling since the advent of the current democratic rule to attract FDI, yet we live in a world with shifting economic power; from the G7 (Group of 7 Developed or Industrialized Economies) to the new E7 (the 7 Emerging Market Economies), urging Nigeria to take cognizance of the shifting, to 'opportunistically position itself', so as to identify who to really partner with, both in terms of investment, capital flows and all sorts of bilateral arrangements...Isn't it paradoxically bemusing that small country like Botswana (with less than the population of Nigeria's capital territory, Abuja) already housed foreign automobile companies manufacturing electric vehicles and electric boats. News bulletins and live broadcast monitored by this writer on Botswana TV International and France 24 TV showed Chinese companies are establishing replica plants in small African countries like Botswana (to produce electric vehicles, electric boats, etc. but refused to set up such companies in Nigeria – The sad reality being that most of the finished products from such plant will end up in the Nigerian market. It is a discernable fact that all China is interested in is making Nigeria the unimpeded all-time destination for its countless finished products made from the mineral

resources it carted cheaply away from Nigeria and other “mumuish” African countries. He urged Nigerians to look inwards, take advantage of its natural endowments which cut across every facet of life, and work assiduously to achieve development.

High level mutual assistance on security also calls for caution. This is because aside issue of mistrust earlier dissected, hideous activities traced to characters of Chinese extractions, who intelligence alleged are part-funding and arming bandits, kidnappers whose dare-devilry is why parts of Northern-Nigeria seem to be under devastating siege in the past eight to ten years. Nigerian newspapers are now routinely inundated with bizarre narratives of how Chinese entities are linked to terrorism financing in order to protect their illegal mining activities across the country (African Defense Forum report, 2024; Uthman, 2023; Ejiofor, 2024; Olander, 2023; Mamman, 2020).

China is ever quick to deny any such allegation leveled against its citizens even amidst very overwhelming evidences. Of course, it's a known fact that these Chinese culprits operate alongside their Nigerian aiders and abettors, who also help them get off the hook of law enforcement agents when necessary, or help these Chinese (who are mostly living in Nigeria illegally) acquire necessary papers if need be. One wonders how China can help in the fight against insecurity, when it is obvious it is part of the insecurity in the first place.

High level mutual learning seem to be the only aspect that offer some hope, as activities (albeit that it is one-sided) aimed at fostering cultural exchange, learning of the Chinese language by Nigerians, exchange learning programmes like offering scholarship to Nigerians to study in China universities, free fellowship programmes, training workshops, conferences, etc. Reports have it that the Chinese Embassy in Nigeria, have been collaborating with relevant agencies, institutions to set up Chinese cultural clubs in Nigerian schools with reverberating impacts very glaring for all to see...The fear still is, if China is not reverting to the colonialists' theatrics, where the latter surreptitiously infiltrated our ranks, brain-washed our forefathers into adopting all that is western as the norm, and today we all know the implications for successive generations of Nigerians, to the extent that westernized dear country men and women would gladly enthused, “I don't understand a word of any (local) Nigerian language” or that “I don't use anything that is local” – We are gradually losing everything (customs, norms, life-style, name it, to the western world. One hopes and prays that China is not out to conduct the post-mortem.

Conclusion

Pursuit of the tenets of globalization by successive government especially in this democratic era reasonable except the ruinous challenges of effective implementation occasioned by insincerity, trust deficit and corruption. Unlike the late '70s and early '80s Russians who facilitated and helped Nigeria established the largest steel complex at Ajaokuta for the purposes of maximizing the large deposit of iron ore in Itakpe and elsewhere all over Nigeria, China today prefer to collude with ever willing corrupt Nigerian citizens to illegally (or even legally) exploit and siphon our raw mineral resources across the length and breadth of Nigeria while making very buoyant ‘returns’ in the shades of crediting huge sums into foreign accounts, sponsorship of political aspirations, etc. of such colluding Nigerians...Various security reports of the nightmarish banditry, kidnapping for ransoms and ‘Talibanic gangsterism’ that have made parts of the Northern Nigerian ‘no-go’ areas have been linked to underhand dealings of Chinese

elements who are bent on creating tensions and diversionary activities while they and their abettors guaranteed the continuous lucrative looting of our natural resources.

It is disheartening to note the preference by most Nigerians for anything foreign. The bureaucracy prefer to work with foreigners instead of fellow Nigerians with equal or better competence – This writer witnessed the establishment of Startimes Cable TV in Abuja. These guys came in ‘bathroom slippers’ but, our dear NTA officials chose them as partners; because of the inherent ‘benefits’ of doing business with them. It’s doubtful if they came with any fund of their own to invest, rather NTA did the off-takers job to pave the way for the so-called expatriates; whereas the indigenous people who mustered such efforts met with frustrations from the bureaucracy, and their endeavours came to nothing. A number of indigenous investors attempted to float cable TVs but no sooner they started than they went under – We prefer shylock Multi-choice, Startimes, name them, to any indigenous outfit. Even the Nigerian government-enabled Free TV is comatose, whereas Free TV of smaller countries (like Botswana TV News International) are relaying their signals to the whole world. We have palliate for ‘foreign things’; the reason foreigners (especially those of Asian origin) even engage retailing business in our cities unhindered. Yet we have seen instances where our ever adventurous Igbo brothers are manhandled by Chinese citizens, agents for no just cause other than they engage in businesses side by side Chinese business men in China, without any punitive actions taken against Chinese citizens that carried out such attacks. And sadly enough neither the Nigerian Embassy in China nor the government back home will make any attempt to seek justice for such victims. Why the preference for imported goods rather than buying locally made? Trade between China and Nigeria is said to have hit 15 billion dollars in nine months in 2024, with China having the lion share of the pie, of course. This asymmetric trade relation is so owing to our unbridled appetite for foreign products, a phenomenon that negates the quest for intra-African trade relations advocated by our founding fathers like the great Zik of Africa (Ibn Chambers, 2024). For instance, ASEAN intra-trade is 60 percent, while that of Africa is insignificantly low at less than half the rate of ASEAN’s according to Mohammed Ibn Chambers at a recent event; urging Africa in line with the vision of our founding fathers, leveraging on AFTA to boost intra trade, as well as promote Africa’s industrial growth (Ibn Chambers, 2024).

The burden of trust deficit considering China’s antecedents has no doubt created a lacuna concerning the implementation of the CSP. We should not be deceived China’s disguised hypocrisy of: ‘oh I’m your fellow brother; we’re facing the imperialism of the West together; let’s come together to defeat them; let’s trade together; let’s do currency swap; let me into your rich mineral laden soil to help you exploit your God-given resources to facilitate your development...’ We can go and on. To borrow local parlance, “all na wash”; behind such façade is the true intention to position self as the new colonial master. A number of African countries have regrets already for being such novices to have fallen cheaply for China’s antics, as China has been reported to have taken over ownership of so-called developmental infrastructures built with Chinese loans by Chinese entities. We cannot forget in a hurry the recent international embarrassment or it utter humiliation of Nigeria occasioned by the seizures of our presidential aircrafts and the putting up for auctioning of mission houses abroad in debt judgments secured by Chinese entities.

From all indications, all the so-called agreements signed by successive Nigerian governments with China have been sort of one-sided in terms benefits: trade between the two countries has only opened the huge import-dependent, foreign-goods-consuming Nigerian market to China that has turned it to a dumping ground. One would have thought that China would use

the opportunity of the relationship with Nigeria to aid her to engage in massive value-chain policy leading helping Nigeria achieve massive manufacturing capacity, or to encourage her to imbibe the popular Chinese formative years doctrine of ‘what China cannot produce Chinese do not buy nor use’ in order to entrench the virtue of patriotism that have been energizing force behind the rapid development of China. Instead, Chinese entities prefer to collude, aid and abet corrupt Nigerian functionaries of all cadres to perpetrate the blind, blatant looting of Nigerian common patrimony. Similarly, reports have it that equally corrupt and mischievous Chinese facilitate all sorts of loan facilities for Nigeria hoisted around certain infrastructural projects from Chinese lending institutions only for them (Chinese) aid ‘fantastically’ corrupt Nigerian officials and citizens to loot and repatriate these monies abroad into the private accounts of such dubious Nigerians.

Recommendations

Enforcement of the principle of reciprocity is key, in which Nigeria must begin to exert its influence by ensuring a ‘tit-for-tat’ external relations. For instance, it is common knowledge the stringent conditions Nigerians who engage in one enterprise or another operate under in China, whereas Chinese citizens engage in kinds of enterprises here without any restriction. Enough is enough...Nigeria must not continue to turn blind eyes to atrocious mishandling of our citizen in China while their own citizens commit all sorts of crimes here without being called to account. Also, we compel companies that want to sell their products in our market to set up factories in Nigeria; otherwise impose ‘crushing’ tariffs that will deter their importation, so as to encourage local productions of such products.

Successive Nigerian government must rise to the challenge of meting out punitive measures to Chinese elements who are caught engaging in fraudulent activities across the length and breadth of Nigeria...Just as this paper is in the works, media reports had it that scores of Chinese fraud-stars were apprehended in a weekend Police raid on their hideouts (Newspapers’ reports of Monday 4 November 2024). Public commentators were saying that nothing will happen to these culprits as usual, insisting the police raid is media hype, they won’t take the Chinese suspects anywhere but in no time release them, albeit that overwhelming evidences are in the possession of the Nigerian police to get convictions at the trial. It’s high time Nigerian police live up to expectation and do its work without any fear or favour. This is more so, because China is not known to punish such erring citizens even when reports are made against its citizens by Nigeria (unlike in the P & ID case where the home government, US, meted out punitive measures on erring officials of the company). The Nigerian Police must forthwith charge any erring Chinese (and their local collaborators of course) to court of competent jurisdiction whenever they are apprehended so the law can take its course over their sharp practices

Nigeria as a matter of national interest must bring itself to reality, to know that no nation will assist it to develop; no country will transfer any technology to it, definitely not China. Nigeria can also like China, lock itself up, ready to fly with the motto, ‘what Nigeria does not produce, Nigerians do not buy nor use’. This policy accelerated the developmental strides of China; it can accelerate Nigeria’s if we muster the will-power. It is doable if we are ready to endure temporal sufferings.

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