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I want to specially thank the Editorial Board for their unreserved contributions towards the production of Volume 2, Number 1, of the Journal of the Faculty of Humanities, Social and Management Sciences (JHSMS), Edwin Clark University, Kiagbodo, Delta State, Nigeria.

JHSMS is a multi-disciplinary journal that promotes academic excellence in research as well as in the dissemination of research reports particularly as it concerns Humanities, Social and Management sciences. JHSMS welcomes and publishes scholarly articles and research reports. These articles are subjected to peer-reviews and editing before they are accepted for publication.

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NIGERIA AND CHINA'S CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL RELATIONS SINCE 1960: IMPACT AND CHALLENGES.

by

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Abstract

Nigeria and China's cultural and educational relations took a new look during Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Culturally and educationally the two countries have impacted each other in many interesting areas. The paper explores in detail the cultural and educational relationship between Nigeria and China since 1960 and how such relation has contributed to the development of both countries culturally and otherwise. The work adopts analytical, historical and descriptive methods. China and Nigeria's relationship on a general note has its lacuna and challenges on both sides. Over the years the relationship between both countries has led to the establishment of schools and cultural centres for both countries. Many Nigerians have adopted the culture of Chinese, while some Nigerians have also learned the Chinese language. Notwithstanding, Nigeria has benefitted from the relationship to an extent. Many students in Nigeria were given scholarship to study in China which resulted in the adoption of the lifestyle of Chinese people, particularly in the area of language. Although many Nigerians have benefitted from China, but the relationship is yet to be balanced because China is not ready to develop the socioeconomic life of Nigerian people. The paper, therefore, recommends that China should have the vision of developing Nigeria technologically and in any other dimensions to ensure the reduction of importation of finished products for mutual gains. More so, the Nigeria government should seek technological transfer from China with the hope of learning their technology.

KEYWORDS: Relation, Culture, Importation, School, Social, Education.

Introduction

Nigeria's first official contact with China was in 1960, during Nigeria's independence celebrations (Manko, 2015:18-30). The invitation of China to Nigeria's independence laid the foundation of the duo relation. In the course of the congratulatory message from the delegation, Chinese leaders acclaimed the great victory won by the Nigerian people in their struggle against colonialism, (Owoeye, 1985, 294).

When China was admitted into the United Nations, Nigeria reciprocated the gesture when, she supported PRC's membership in the world body (Owoeye, 1985, 294). As a result of the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1971, a six-man delegation led by the Nigerian Commissioner for Economic Reconstruction and Development, Adebayo Adedeji, visited Beijing in August 1972, where agreements on economic and technical cooperation, including trade, was signed between the two countries (Ogunsanwo, 2008, 6)

Relations between the two nations grew closer as a result of the international isolation and Western condemnation of Nigeria's military regimes (1970-1998), (BBC News, 2017). Nigeria has since become an important source of oil and petroleum for China's rapidly growing economy and Nigeria is looking to China for help in achieving high economic growth; China has provided extensive economic, military and political support (BBC News, 2017).

In 1971, an important meeting was undertaken by the late Dr Okoi Arikpo, then Federal Commissioner for External Affairs, which preceded the State visit of General Yakubu Gowon, former Head of State, in September, 1974, essentially to demonstrate the non-aligned foreign policy of the Federal Government (Okafor, 2010, 3). The communiqués signed at the end of the visit endorsed, *inter alia*, the friendly ties between both countries (Okafor, 2010, 4). China is considered one of Nigeria's closest allies and partners. She is also one of Nigeria's important trading and export partners. According to a 2014 BBC World Service Poll, 85% of Nigerians view China's influence positively, with only 10% expressing a negative view, making Nigeria the most pro-Chinese nation in the world (BBC News, 2014).

China and Nigeria's Foundational Foreign Policy

Nigeria and China established bilateral relations in February 1971. Since

Nigeria's independence in 1960, Asia was changing into a dynamic economic power while Nigeria was undergoing series of military coup from the 1980s to 1990s. There had been countless visits of leaders from both countries visiting each other from the 1970s until today to strengthen diplomatic relations. These are some important foreign policy objectives of Nigeria and the foreign policy objectives of China towards Africa in general viz: to promote and protect national interests; to promote African integration and support for African unity; to promote international cooperation for the consideration and the consolidation of universal peace and mutual respect among all nations and elimination of discrimination in all its manifestations; respect for international law and treaty obligations and the promotion of world economic order (Mthembu-Salter 2009, 6).

Nigeria has since become an important source of oil and petroleum for China's rapidly growing economy and Nigeria is looking to China for help in achieving high economic growth. China has provided extensive economic, military and political support (BBC News, 2018). In 2004 and 2006, Chinese President Hu Jintao made state visits to Nigeria and addressed a joint session of the National Assembly of Nigeria. Both nations signed a memorandum of understanding on establishing a strategic partnership (Taylor, 2018). China has supported Nigeria's bid for a seat in the U.N. Security Council. From the part of China, the main objectives of their government's foreign policy towards Nigeria are as follows: to increase China's presence in its oil sector; to increase Chinese multinational companies (MNCs) share in the Nigerian market and the expansion of the Nigerian market for Chinese manufactured goods (Mthembu-Salter, 2009, 6).

Nigeria and China's Cultural and Educational Relations

After the establishment of diplomatic relations with China as mentioned earlier, the alliance grew deeper to the extent that both countries embarked on other aspects of relationships. Nigeria was the first African country to establish a cultural centre in China, and the Chinese cultural centre was also established in Nigeria. From time to time many cultural and academic groups from both countries visit each other. Currently, China has established two Confucius Institutes and four Chinese language centres enthusiastic universities. Nigerian people, especially young people are very enthusiastic about learning Chinese. The amity is now deeply rooted in the hearts of the people of both countries (Gu Xiaojie, 2017).

However, concerning reliable and efficient cultural relations an official agreement was signed for that purpose:

China and Nigeria have signed an agreement on cultural cooperation and a protocol on cooperation between institutions of higher learning of the two countries. China began to provide scholarships for Nigerian students to study in China in 1993. From 2002 to 2003, there were 24 Nigerian students studying in China, (“China-Nigeria Relations”, 2004).

During the administration of the former President of Nigeria, Ebele Goodluck Jonathan, in 2013, the strategic partnership between the People's Republic of China and the Federal Republic of Nigeria continued to grow and deepen, with marked progress in practical cooperation in various fields. (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People Republic of China, 2013). Even though China and Nigeria have vastly different historical experiences and cultural traditions, Beijing has been remarkably successful in its efforts to promote Chinese culture in Nigeria.

The military exchanges between China and Nigeria started in the 1980s. The Nigerian Defense Academy sent many delegations to China. In May 1998, Chief of Staff of the Navy, Rear Admiral O. Miko Agigbe visited China. In November of the same year, Lieutenant General Liang Guanglie, Commander of Shenyang Military Area Command, led a military delegation to visit Nigeria. China and Nigeria signed an agreement on cultural cooperation and a protocol on cooperation between institutions of higher learning of the two countries. China began to provide scholarships for Nigerian students to study in China in 1993. Presently many Nigerian students have graduated from Chinese Universities.

The then Nigeria's Information Minister, Labaran Maku, called for greater cooperation in information and cultural exchange between Nigeria and China to further deepen the bilateral ties between the two countries. The Minister made the call in Abuja when he received the Vice-Minister of Information of the People's Republic of China, Li Wufeng on a courtesy visit.

In 2007, Nnamdi Azikiwe University in Akwa, Nigeria, established a Confucius Institute to teach the Chinese language to Nigerian students. As business linkages between China and Nigeria have grown rapidly in recent years, the institute was a successful project (“Chinese Cultural Research

Center”, 2018). Its success was acknowledged on June 29th, when the Chinese embassy in Abuja announced the establishment of Nigeria's first Chinese Cultural Research Center. The embassy also pledged to create an Igbo language institute in China to encourage Chinese university graduates to work in Chinese companies in Nigeria. It was also geared to encourage Nigerian students to study in China, the Chinese government has emphasized China's cultural diversity.

The second prong of China's soft power campaign in Nigeria, media proliferation, has been more unequivocally successful than student exchanges. Through the Star Times Initiative, the Chinese government has been able to establish media linkages with Africa's largest television network, the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) (“Africa's Largest Television Network” 2018). With the NTA's support, China has been able to attract more visitors to cultural exchange events like the opening of a China Gallery in Nigeria's national library and showcase of Chinese culture to Nigerians residing in 18 major cities. Nigeria's Ministry of Information has urged China to reciprocate by featuring more Nigerian programmes in China. This proposal has captured the interest of Chinese officials seeking to expand the bilateral trade partnership, which has grown six-fold over the past decade.

The Chinese film industry has been highly successful in promoting its showcase productions to a Nigerian audience as well. The December 2015 Chinese film festival in Lagos, featuring Chinese films like Chinese Zodiac, Confucius, and Monkey King, attracted large numbers of students and Nigerian government representatives. As more Nigerians learn Chinese, turnout to these events will almost certainly increase. China's special relationship with Nigeria, forged through deep-rooted political bonds and cultural exchanges, is a major victory for its soft power campaign in Africa. As pro-Chinese sentiments in Nigeria are overwhelming at both the elite and popular levels, Nigeria is a perfect testing ground for future Chinese alliance-building efforts in other African countries in the years to come (Ramani, 2017).

China and Nigeria have cooperated greatly in setting up Confucius Institutes in two Nigerian universities. There have also been outstanding achievements in the exchanges of cultural, art and sports groups as well as overseas students. For the Nigerian side, there are 100 overseas students studying in China and more than 300 government officials receiving various training or attending

seminars in China every year. Ten Chinese students studied the Hausa language at Bayero University Kano, (Ramani, 2017). All of those have further strengthened the understanding and friendship between Chinese and Nigerian people, (Ramani, 2017).

China promised to build 100 rural primary schools in Africa, among which Nigeria got four and outnumbered any other African countries, (Renard, 2011, 23). In addition, the Chinese side will not only build classrooms, toilets and enclosure walls but also donate all the necessary desks, chairs and chalk, to ensure that teachers and pupils move in and can just start their lessons. Malaria prevention and treatment centre has been set up in Abuja under the Chinese grant. According to the bilateral agreement, the Chinese government has donated necessary medical equipment, materials and anti-malaria drugs, and dispatched anti-malaria experts to Nigeria to train Nigerian medical staff. The Chinese government is helping to build and equip a 150-bed comprehensive hospital in FCT Abuja (Renard, 2011, 23). Chinese assistance focuses on medical health care, education and capacity building. The purpose is to help improve the living standard of the Nigerian people.

Glaring Challenges Between Nigeria and China Relations

In every bilateral or multilateral relation, there is a visible lacuna that usually confronts both countries. Regarding the duo relation, racism in China remains an obstacle to deeper cultural integration and could deter Nigerian graduates from Chinese universities from making valuable contributions to the Chinese economy. This concern has been especially relevant in Guangzhou, a city that has been the site of a major influx of Nigerian Igbo immigration over the past decade. Negative attitudes toward Nigerians have been fueled by their alleged involvement in drug-related crime in Guangzhou. The Guangzhou police arrested 168 people in conjunction with a drug-smuggling ring in 2013. The majority of people apprehended were citizens of Nigeria and Mali.

The conduct of the Chinese police toward Nigerians has also been controversial. Many Nigerians have expressed frustration at the short length of work visas granted by the Chinese immigration authorities. Perceptions of xenophobia and being targeted by the Chinese authorities have caused many Nigerian Muslims to live together in insular communities. Even though there is no quick-fix solution to these problems, Beijing's strategy of expanding student exchanges and educating more Chinese students in the Igbo language could play an instrumental role in reducing ethnic tensions over time. If these

efforts prove successful in Nigeria, China could attempt to make similar overtures towards countries with more pervasive anti-Chinese sentiments, like Ethiopia and Zambia, to consolidate stronger strategic partnerships.

Conclusion

For more than 50 years, the bilateral relationship between the two countries has been soaring socially and economically. Despite this fact, there is great trade equilibrium which continues to hamper economic growth in the country. Without an iota of doubt, China is benefitting more from the relationship. The bilateral relationship should be reviewed. This will lead to economic equilibrium between the two countries. Nigeria can cooperate with China in many ways to increase agricultural productivity. A policy focusing on agriculture is necessary to improve the welfare of Nigerian rural populations who, despite rapid urbanization, continue to be economically and politically significant. Although its demand for agricultural products is high, China's foreign trade and investment in agriculture is relatively low. But Chinese provision of economic and technical cooperation is much needed given the withdrawal of Nigerian traditional donors from the sector.

Enhancing technologies and pledging support to farmers, as China did during its periods of food insecurity, would be a critical step to advancing Nigeria's Green Revolution. China's investment and economic cooperation could improve Nigeria's agricultural productivity thus easing Nigeria's food security problem. China's contribution to the development of Nigeria's agriculture should focus on deepening the understanding in Nigeria of China's framework for agricultural development and food security and the sharing of technology, technical and financial support for agricultural development. The Chinese experience in agricultural research and development policies, institutions and management, especially for high yield crops, would be useful to Nigeria's agricultural producers. In this regard, projects such as those of China-African Development Fund should be replicated because they will introduce advanced Chinese industrial technology, including cheaper machinery such as tractors, (Gubak, 2015, 285)

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