

## **Why Countries Give Aid: A Comparison of US' And China's Interests in Nigeria**

**Charles S. Ijuye-Dagogo & Emmanuel E. Obuah**

Department of History and Diplomatic Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

### ***Abstract***

*The ineffectiveness of foreign aid has been blamed on poor policies and institutions in the recipient state. However, aid scholars have not paid much attention to the donor's intentions for giving aids. This study examined the rationale behind the US' and China's aids to Nigeria. It examined the primary and secondary interests of both countries to Nigeria. The study used realism and power theory as the theoretical foundations of comparing US' and China's interests in Nigeria. The study used a historical-descriptive research design with secondary data from journals articles, textbooks and online articles. The secondary data were analyzed using content analysis. This study found that the US and China gave aid to Nigeria as a tool to meet its economic interests. This study concludes that foreign aid is not a product of altruism but rather a product of the donor's national interests. The study recommended that Nigeria should assess the cost and benefits of aid receipts from the US and China to ensure it meets its own strategic interests.*

**Keywords:** *Foreign aid, National interest, Aid effectiveness, Development*

### **Introduction**

Over the years, Nigeria has been a recipient of aid from the US and China. The US government began providing aid to Nigeria as far back as 1950 through the Economic Cooperation Administration (USAID, 2011). In 1960, the US government through contracts with four American Universities assisted Nigeria in building Colleges of Agriculture in the Universities of Ibadan, University of Nigeria – Nsukka, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria and the University of Ife. In 1966, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) worked with Nigerian engineers to construct the Asejire water dam on the River Osun in Western Nigeria. The dam was to provide 22 million gallons of treated water daily (USAID, 2011). By the 1980s and 1990s the USAID was engaged in eradicating polio, promoting family planning, livestock preservation, primary education and democracy and governance. In 1998 the US provided US\$4 million for the 1999 elections. By 2011, the US government provided US\$32 million for general elections. Between 2004 and 2009, the US provided US\$1.5 billion to fight against HIV/AIDS (USAID, 2011). From 2001 to 2008 it is on record that the US government has provided about US\$718 million to support development in Nigeria (USAID, 2018).

Formal diplomatic relations between Nigeria and China did not exist until 10 February, 1971. Nigeria considers China a valuable partner (Utomi, 2008). China provided military hard ware and training to counter the Niger Delta and Boko Haram insurgencies. In 2007 a successful partnership between both countries led to the launch of Nigerian Communication Satellite (nigcomsat-1) to develop cellular and internet networks in Africa. China has over 40 development projects in Nigeria. They include a US\$2.5 billion loan for Nigerian railway, power and telecommunication projects. In 2008 Nigeria and China signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for US\$1 billion for the construction of houses and water supply in Abuja. Beijing continued to provide 100 scholarships every year to Nigerian students looking for Chinese education (Oshita, 2016).

These evidences of aid portray the US and China as major stakeholders in Nigeria's development and growth. The US and China would be seen as primarily interested in Nigeria's development. However, States in international relations are not primarily altruistic and it is important to ascertain what the motives for the US and China's aids to Nigeria are.

### **Statement of Problem**

Foreign aid has long been a contentious issue in international relations, with many countries using it as a tool for advancing their foreign policy objectives. Nigeria as one of the largest and most important countries in Africa has been the recipient of significant amounts of foreign aid from both the United States and China. However, the effectiveness of this aid in promoting development and fostering diplomatic relations between the countries remains a subject of debate. Between 1960 and 2015 the US has provided over US\$28 billion in foreign aid to Nigeria (OECD, 2019). Adebayo (2019) noted that China has provided about US\$6.5 billion as loan to Nigeria between 2002 and 2019. This estimate does not include the millions of dollars in grants Nigeria received from China. Nigeria on her part needs all the help it can get to attain favorable economic growth and human development.

Despite several decades of billions of dollars of aid from US and China, Nigeria is still bedeviled with endemic poverty, inequality, and unemployment. The country's life expectancy was 54.3 years, education index was at 0.486 (on a scale between over 0.950 and under 0.350); only 54.4 percent of the population have access to electricity; 50.2 percent of the population live in slums; 46.0 percent live below the poverty line; oil accounts for 94 percent of exports; unemployment rate is at 16.5 percent; and about 1.9 million people are living with HIV/AIDS (UNDP, 2019).

Burnside and Dollar (2000) suggested that aid can only be effective when the recipient has the right policies and institutions. However, this assumption presupposed that the donor's interest is for aid to lead to the recipient's development. It ignored that donors may have other interests to achieve with foreign aid. A number of scholars have examined the topic of foreign aid from the US and China (Lancaster, 2007; Obuah, 2013; Brautigam, 2009; Alden, 2008; Johnston & Rudyak, 2017). However, the area of comparative analysis of the motives behind foreign aid has not been adequately examined. There are gaps in the literature of US and China's actual interests in Nigeria. China has been richly criticized by US policy makers and scholars for being resource hungry and is only interested in Nigeria to meet its need for raw materials (Alden, 2008). Does this imply that the US itself does not require natural resources from Nigeria? This study aimed to fill this gap by ascertaining the reasons why the US and China give aids to Nigeria. It attempted to ascertain the motives of aid by exposing the interests of both donors.

### **Aim and Objectives**

The study aimed to ascertain the rationale for the US' and China's aids to Nigeria by examining their interests in Nigeria. The objectives of the study include to:

- i. examine the US' interests in Nigeria;
- ii. determine China's interests in Nigeria; and
- iii. compare the US' and China's interests in Nigeria.

## **Realism and Power Theory**

The theoretical foundation of this study is realism and power theory. Realism is one of the foundational theories of international relations. Realism is the view that international politics is driven by the competitive quest for power between states to maximize their interests (Akpan, 2012). Hans Morgenthau in his iconic work *Politics among nations: The struggle for power and peace* stated that “politics is a struggle for power over men, and whatever its ultimate aim may be, power is its immediate goal and the modes of acquiring, maintaining, and demonstrating it, determine the technique of political action” (Morgenthau, 2012, p. 43).

Power in international relations is the ability of a state to use tangible and intangible resources and assets to influence the outcomes of international events towards its interest. Power enhances the capacity of the actors in international politics to achieve their interest as encapsulated in their foreign policy (Akpan, 2012). Power can be categorized into hard power and soft power. Hard power includes coercive power like military might and economic strength while soft power has to do with the power of cooption. The theory of soft power was postulated by Joseph Nye in his works *Soft Power: The means to success in world politics*. A powerful country is one with relatively large population and territory, extensive natural resources, economic strength, military force and social stability. These features are concrete and measurable. Nye sees soft power as the ability to get others to do what you want without coercion but rather by cooption. Soft power is those intangible assets that make a state attractive. Co-optive power can be based on the attractiveness of a one’s culture and values (Nye, 2002).

Nye stated that soft power is a key part of international politics. He made reference to the statement of a former French foreign minister who suggested that “Americans are powerful because they can inspire dreams and desires of others, thanks to the mastery of global images through film and television and because, for these same reasons, large numbers of students from other countries come to the United States to finish their studies” (Nye, 2002, p.23). Similarly, Nye pointed to E.H. Carr’s work in 1939 that suggested that international power includes military power, economic power and the power over opinion (as cited in Nye, 2002, p.24). A country can enjoy political clout bigger than what military and economic prowess can produce when it defines its national interest to include attractive causes like economic aid and peacemaking. This suggests that foreign aid is an instrument donors use to express soft power over recipients.

Foreign aid is not philanthropic but should be regarded as a soft power tool that would end in exploitation. Alexander stated that governments maintain the fiction that foreign aid is motivated by altruistic rather than strategic and economic interests because this assists with the nourishment of a domestic collective ego that the country and its citizens make a positive contribution to the planet beyond the consumption of its resources. Foreign aid and development assistance fit well within the remit of soft power because it seeks to improve the attractiveness of the donor within the minds of domestic and international audiences (Alexander, 2018).

In line with the realist and power theory, the US and China used aid as a means to advance their respective interests in Nigeria, such as securing access to natural resources, gaining political influence, or countering the influence of the other country. The realist and power lenses helped identify the underlying motives and strategic calculations of the US and China. The theoretical perspectives revealed the strategic, political and economic factors that shape the dynamics of foreign aid and relationships between these countries.

## **Methodology**

This study used a historical-descriptive research design to examine the US' and China's interests in Nigeria. It looks at the history of US-Nigeria relations and China-Nigeria relations from 1960 and 1971 respectively to 2020.

This study used qualitative data from secondary sources. The secondary sources include books, journals, newspaper articles and online publications. Secondary data for this research were collected using desk research method. Desk research involves reading book, journals, newspaper articles and online publications, related to the US' and China's interests in Nigeria. Content analysis was used to analyze the primary and secondary data. Content analysis is the objective and systematic analysis of texts by summarizing and explicating information from written documents relevant to the research.

## **The US' Interest in Nigeria**

The US' interest in Nigeria can be divided into two. These are the primary interests or vital interest (Ojo, 2016) and the secondary interest. The US' vital interest is to sustain its economic growth and the security of its citizens at home and abroad. The secondary interests are promoting democracy and human rights, and maintaining its sphere of influence in Africa through Nigeria. These interests are not mutually exclusive as they combine at one time or the other to determine US policy to Nigeria.

During the Nigerian civil war, the US was hesitant to intervene decisively. The US aimed to secure its commercial interest at the time. There were at least 85 American firms in Nigeria. The total of US private investment stood at about US\$800 million of which US\$100 million was invested by Gulf oil and US\$50 million by Mobil Oil Corporation. Mobil, Texaco and Indian Textile Mills were some of the American investments in Eastern Nigeria (Oghene, 1983). Other American investments in Nigeria at the time included International Telecommunication Company (ITC), American Telephone Company (ATC), Slumberger, Reynolds Construction Company and American agro-allied industries (Onuegbu & Hanson, 2016). The Johnson Administration's policy of "conflict avoidance" during the Nigerian civil war was an attempt to secure American investments in Nigeria and Biafra controlled territories (Dickson, 1985).

In 1973 the US surpassed Britain as the number one importer of Nigeria's crude oil. This was mostly due to the oil embargo placed on the US by Arab countries during the Yom Kippur War. Crude oil became a major factor in Nigeria - US relations. US investments in Nigeria's oil sector grew steadily (Jibrilla, 2018). In 1974, trade between Nigeria and US rose to US\$1.65 billion. In 1980, 46 percent of Nigeria's oil exports went to the US; this later increased to 54.5 percent in 1988. Between 1989 and 1995 US investment in Nigeria grew from US\$200 million to US\$779 million (Ayam, 2008, p. 126).

With the return to democratic rule and the advent of Nigeria's Fourth Republic in 1999, the US prioritized its investments and trade with Nigeria. In 2000 Nigeria's exports to the US was worth US\$7.9 billion while imports amounted to US\$514.5 million worth of goods indicating a favorable trade balance of US\$7.42 billion for Nigeria. In 2001 and 2002, in terms of aggregate African export to the US, Nigeria had the largest share with US\$7.3 billion out of a total of US\$61.7 billion followed by South Africa and Kenya (Faseke, 2021, p. 76).

On 18 May 2000, President Bill Clinton signed the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) as part of the US Trade and Development Act of 2000. AGOA was set up to promote sub-Saharan Africa's trade and export growth by removing quotas and extending duty-free status to the export of

designated commodities from Africa to the US. The belief was that AGOA result in economic benefits for sub-Saharan Africa through increased foreign exchange earnings (Kalu, 2014). Nigeria became AGOA-eligible on October 2, 2000. The United States emphasized that AGOA would benefit Nigeria's textiles and apparel industry. However, according to trade statistics, petroleum oil and natural gas are the most exported commodities from Nigeria under AGOA. Natural gas and energy-related products comprised 94 percent (\$48.4 million) of total US imports from Nigeria under AGOA in 2011. Products unrelated to natural gas and energy amounted to a meager \$3.4 billion. In 2019 and 2020, exports of energy-related products to the United States under AGOA totaled \$1.6 billion and \$474 million, respectively. In 2019 and 2020, textiles and apparel exports to the United States totaled \$3,000 and \$22,000, respectively (AGO, 2023). The United States' increased demand for Nigerian crude oil contributed to Nigeria's mono-economy. Since the 1970s oil surge, Nigeria has neglected the production of palm kernel, palm oil, groundnuts, cocoa, and bananas in favor of crude oil.

After the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in Washington DC, the US actively internationalized its war on terror. The scope of the US' counter terrorism has expanded to include threats in Africa. The US main security concern in Nigeria was the rise of religious extremist terror groups such as Boko Haram, ISWAP and Ansaru.

According to a freelance journalist in the United State Institute for Peace (USIP):

Boko Haram is an Islamic sect that believes northern politics has been seized by a group of corrupt, false Muslims. It wants to wage a war against them and the Federal Republic of Nigeria generally, to create a pure Islamic State ruled by Sharia law. Since 2019 it has been driven by a desire for vengeance against politicians, police, and Islamic authorities for their roles in brutal suppression of the group that year. (Walker cited in Oyebade, 2014, p. 60)

On 23 December 2009, Nigerian born Umar Farouk Abdumutallab was arrested for a failed attempt to bomb Northwest Airlines Flight 253 flying from Amsterdam to Detroit. The manner with which the failed plot was carried out convinced the US that Boko Haram had links with Al-Qaeda. The commander of the US Africa Command, General Carter Ham, stated that several intelligence reports suggested that Boko Haram had contacts with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. He also suggested that the group had ties with Al-Shabab (Aliu, 2017). The US responded to this threat by placing Nigeria its Terror Watch List (Oyebade, 2014). The US designated Boko Haram, ISWAP and Ansaru as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO) under section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (as amended) and as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs) subject to US financial sanctions under Executive Order 13224 (Husted & Blanchard, 2020). This implied that the US would begin to exercise extra caution in dealing with Nigerians traveling through to their countries. It also meant that investors would be dissuaded from doing business with Nigeria (Osaretin & Ajebon, 2012).

In 2012 the Director of National Intelligence in the US James R. Clapper stated that Boko Haram was interested in hitting Western targets such as the US embassy and hotels frequently visited by westerners. Buttressing this claim John O. Brennan, then Deputy National Security Advisor for Homeland Security and Counter terrorism and Assistant to the US President suggested that Boko Haram was increasingly looking to attack Western interests in Nigeria (Oyebade, 2014). The US sees Boko Haram as serious threat to its interests in Nigeria. There are a sizeable number of US citizens

and a lot of American investments in Nigeria. A threat to Nigeria automatically impacts the US economy and American citizens (Aliu, 2017).

The US helped train Nigerian troops and supplied intelligence information to tackle Boko Haram (Faseke, 2021). Secretary of State Hilary Clinton expressed America's desire to help Nigeria's counter terrorism effort through the management of military and intelligence resources. The US expressed interest to establish an Intelligence Fusion Center (IFC) which would help the government to streamline and manage intelligence gotten from various agencies (Oyebade, 2014). The US proscribed Boko Haram and placed a bounty of US\$7 million on the heads of the group's leader, Abubakar Shekau and his cohorts. (Aliu, 2017)

On the night of 14 and 15 April 2014 about 276 mostly Christian female students aged from 16 to 18 were kidnapped by the Islamic terrorist group Boko Haram from the Government Girls Secondary School at the town of Chibok in Borno State, Nigeria (The Guardian, 2014, para. 2). On February 19, 2018 at 5:30 pm, 110 schoolgirls aged 11–19 years old were kidnapped by the Boko Haram terrorist group from the Government Girls' Science and Technical College (GGSTC) in Dapchi in Yobe State (Aljazeera, 2018, para. 2). These incidents sparked international outrage and raised US concerns for the internationalization of the anti-terrorism campaign.

In response to the kidnapping of the school children in Chibok and Dapchi, the Obama Administration sent an interagency team to Nigeria to support search and rescue efforts. President Obama also sent an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) and about 80 US military personnel to neighboring Chad to support recovery operations through surveillance activities. US policy makers showed sustained interest in the victim of the Chibok and Dapchi abductions. Several members of Congress met with or hosted Chibok survivors. In 2016 one of the victims testified before the House of Representatives and President Trump hosted two Chibok survivors in the White House in 2017 (Husted & Blanchard, 2020).

In October 2008 the African Command (AFRICOM) was created. AFRICOM serves as a regional strategic hub for military planners to plot and implement strategies for America's security interests. The mandate of AFRICOM include the war on terror, cooperation to provide humanitarian assistance, build partnership capability, overseas security, defense support to non-military missions and if directed training operations to help African governments (Abegurin, 2014). It is widely believed that AFRICOM was established to protect US oil interests in the Gulf of Guinea. On February 18 2008 Vice Admiral Robert Moeller declared that "the free flow of natural resources from Africa to the global market was one of AFRICOM's guiding principles" (Abegurin, 2014, p. 80).

In the post-Cold War era, the US believed that insecurity in Nigeria is partly caused by the inability of the government to provide better living and social justice for its citizens. A purely people centered government that looks out for the rights of every citizen is still a work in progress in Nigeria. The US emphasized democratic principles as not only a catalyst for development but also a panacea to insecurity.

The US believes that democracy would facilitate a strong developmental state and strengthen the capacity of a state to tackle social challenges. This notion was popular at a time when most African countries were under authoritarian rule. Democracy was a means to do away with repressive and autocratic governments, as well as improve the living standards of people (Ojo, 2016). The US sought to help improve the economic stability, and wellbeing of Nigerians by strengthening democratic

institutions, improving governance, transparency and accountability, promoting human rights, encouraging two-way trade and investment and professionalizing security forces (US Embassy & Consulate in Nigeria, 2021). President Clinton on his part stated that “if Nigeria, with its large population and its vast resources is well governed, it will be a very appealing place to people all over the world to invest” (Ojo, 2016, p. 170).

During the Babangida regime, the US was critical of the regime’s role hindering democracy by annulling an election that was credited for being free and fair. The in response to the annulled June 12, 1993 elections in Nigeria, the US cancelled US\$11 million in assistance for budgetary support to Nigeria’s Health Ministry; terminated development assistance; ended military aid and denied entry to the US to Nigerian policy makers. General Ibrahim Babangida was denied entry into the US and air links between both countries were cut. The Lagos airport was deemed unsafe. However, there was uninterrupted trade between Nigeria and the US (Ayam, 2008).

Similarly, the Abacha regime came under fire for its anti-democratic activities and its human right abuses. Following the emergence of General Sani Abacha, the US imposed visa restrictions on the government, its cronies and family members. The Abacha regime incarcerated the acclaimed winner of the June 12, 1993 presidential election, jailed alleged coup plotters and launched repressive attacks against human rights groups and pro-democracy associations in Nigeria. This put a strain on Nigeria-US relations. The US imposed sanctions on Nigeria and encouraged allied to do the same (Osaretin & Ajebon, 2012).

The US reacted to the anti-democratic decisions by Abacha military regimes and expelled the Nigerian military attaché and the withdrawal of US Military Assistance Officer in the Nigerian Embassy in Washington. The US government also suspended the replacement of its Defense attaché in Lagos (Ojo, 2016). The US terminated the joint military training with Nigeria. Washington also used diplomatic efforts by sending civil rights leader Jesse Jackson, then UN Ambassador Bill Richardson, and former Ambassador Donald Mc Henry as envoys to convince Abacha to implement reforms (Dagne & Ploch, 2007).

Following the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Ogoni activists, the US instituted a halt on direct air travel from the US to Nigeria; suspended foreign aid and banned the sale of military equipment. Despite the political sanctions, economic ties flourished. The US was still Nigeria’s largest imported of Nigeria’s crude oil (Normandy, 1997). The Clinton Administration recalled its ambassador and pushed a resolution at the UN General Assembly that condemned Nigeria’s action. The Department of States in its Human Rights Report on Nigeria in 1997 wrote that “the human rights record remained dismal. Throughout the year, Abacha’s Government relied regularly on arbitrary detention and harassment to silence its most outspoken critics” (Dagne & Ploch, 2007, p. 10).

In Nigeria’s fourth republic the US maintained its concern for democracy and human rights. However, the US’ interest in human rights infringed upon Nigeria’s cultural peculiarities. In 2015 President Obama lectured Africans on democracy and good governance and persuaded them to adopt and legalize homosexuality and Lesbians, Bi-Sexuals, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) rights. This came on the heels of Nigeria passing the Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act and the criminalization of LGBTQ people under the Criminal Code Act. The US pressure for LGBTQ rights was seen as an insult to the cultural sensibilities of Nigerians and an undue imposition of western values (Ojo & Fawole, 2020).

The US' democratization rhetoric does not really depict reality. Resources set aside for promoting democracy in Africa and Nigeria were modest and not substantial. From 1990 to 2000 assistance for democratization in sub-Saharan Africa was about six percent of the total non-military development assistance. Promoting democracy can be seen as a cover to secure the US economic interest in Nigeria. Nigeria's oil and population were determinants for US democratization policy. Democracy would ensure a favorable polity for domestic and international economic activities. The US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs stated that "our stake in Africa is simple: enlightened self-interest" (Ojo, 2016, p. 167).

Nigeria is Africa's most populous country with a population of about 216 million people. Nigeria plays a major political and economic role in Africa and wields significant influence in regional bodies like the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (Husted & Blanchard, 2020). The US sees Nigeria as an influential power in Africa. During the crisis in Angola the US needed Nigeria's support for the FNLA during the Angola crisis. The belief was that if Nigeria supported the FNLA, other African countries would do the same. Nigeria's decision to side with the MPLA was met with a halt on aid to Nigeria and Nigeria was required to pay for technical services from US firms. Nigeria also retaliated by sending its army to occupy the United States Information Services (USIS) building in Lagos in 1975. On three occasions the US Secretary of States was not received by the Nigerian government (Faseke, 2021) until 1976 US President Carter visited Nigeria to promote bilateral, political and economic networks with emerging regional powers. This was the first time an American President visited Nigeria (Ola, 2019).

At the end of the Cold War the US emerged as a world leader and required the support of regional leaders to implement its policies and programmes. Nigeria is a country that has much potential to stand as a regional ally that would promote US policies in Africa. The former US Secretary of State, Madeline Albright suggested that "America has a profound security and economic interest in helping build an Africa that is stable, democratic and increasingly prosperous and Nigeria as a regional power is a bell weather nation" (as cited in Ojo, 2016, p.172).

The US is concerned with the increasingly friendly relation between Nigeria and China. On 18 February, 2008, Vice Admiral Robert Muller declared that China's growing influence in Africa is a major challenge to US interest in the region (Abegurin, 2014). China is a rising global economic and technological super power interested in Africa's rich resources. In the last two decades African countries were fed up with US imposition of irrational political, economic and social conditionalities, constant sanctimonious preaching on democracy, human rights and LGBTQ rights, have increasingly turned to China. Within a decade China surpassed the US to become Africa's largest trading partner and gained political influence in the region.

The US interest was to secure its strategic resource needs in Africa against China's encroachment. The State Department's Advisor on AFRICOM, Peter J. Pham stated thus:

. . . protecting access to hydrocarbon and other strategic resources which Africa has in abundance, a task which includes ensuring that no other interested third parties, such as China, India, Japan or Russia obtain monopolies or preferential treatment (Pham cited in Ojo & Fawole, 2020, p. 100)

In light of increased competition for influence in Africa from China, the Trump Administration unveiled a new African policy that focused on commercial ties, counter terrorism and better targeted foreign aid. Trump's major concern was countering and containing China's influence in Africa. The



Trump Administration encouraged Nigeria to pick the US over China in its commercial, security, political and economic relations. This contradicted Nigeria's effort to diversify its economic ties with Great Powers rather than an over dependence on one super power (Sesay & Olayode, 2020).

China is continuously painted as villain by American policy makers. Africa has been warned of the nefarious intentions of China in the region. China is depicted as a resource sucking vampire that has only commercial interests in Africa and is not bordered about the region's development. Notwithstanding the rhetoric and accusations, it is pertinent to expose China's interest in Nigeria.

### **China's Interest in Nigeria**

Page (2018) argued that China's interests in Nigeria included trade and market access; access to energy sources; security of Chinese nationals and investments; and non-opposition at the UN. Nigeria is Africa's largest economy and most populous nation. This provides a wide range of opportunities for Chinese companies. Nigeria also has a rapidly expanding middle class that are potential consumers of Chinese manufactured goods. China is keen on maintaining access to Nigeria's significant oil and gas reserves to reduce overdependence on Middle East energy imports. China needs Nigeria to be secured to ensure that its citizens and investments are safe. Nigeria is also a valuable political friend to China at the regional and international levels. Nigeria voting pattern at the UN and its support for the One-China policy are part of China's interest towards Nigeria (Page, 2018).

China's economic interest in Nigeria includes its natural resources and large market (Osondu-Oti, 2016). China needs Nigeria's natural resources for its booming industries. China is also interested in Nigeria's huge population for Chinese manufactured goods and investments (van de Looy, 2006). China is the world's second largest consumer of oil after the US and has negotiated oil deals with more than a dozen countries in Africa to satisfy its thirst (Forestal, 2008). China's rapid industrialization and growth rate of 11 percent has caused it to expand its sources of energy. China's oil consumption was predicted to increase from 3.5 million bpd in 2003 to 13.1 million bpd in 2030 (Onyekanola & Itodo, 2019).

Trade between Nigeria and China has grown over the years. In 1969 trade between both countries was a meager £2.3 million and went up to £5.3 million and £10.3 million in 1970 and 1971 respectively. The volume of trade between both countries was relatively low until 1993 when China became a net importer of crude oil (Ayoola, 2013). In 1994 trade rose to US\$90 million and more than doubled to US\$210 million in 1993 and increased to US\$830 million in 2000. In 2008 total trade between both countries was US\$7.2 billion. In 2009 and 2010 trade volumes grew to US\$7.3 billion and US\$7.7 billion respectively. In 2013 Nigeria accounted for six percent of China's total trade with Africa. Nigeria is China's third largest trading partner in Africa. The trade balance favored China. In 2013 China's trade surplus with Nigeria was US\$1.09 billion (Gold & Devadson, 2015). In 2020 trade has increased to US\$13.66 billion and Nigeria has become China's largest trading partner in Africa (Ojeme, 2020)

Nigeria was the second major investment destination for China after South Africa. Nigeria accounts for 5 percent of China's FDI outflows to Africa. China's FDI to Nigeria is often skewed towards the extractive industries and construction industries. Nigeria's extractive industry experienced an unprecedented rise in Chinese investments from US\$24 million in 2003 to US\$333 million in 2012 (Gold & Devadson, 2015). However, investments have grown to include the manufacturing,

information and communication technologies sectors (Gold & Devadson, 2015; Gimba & Ibrahim, 2018).

Nigeria's oil and gas sector receives 75 percent of China's FDI. China invested in raw material deposits overseas and is multiplying its trading partners in order to secure regular supplies. Chinese FDI to Nigeria was carried out by State Owned Enterprise (SOE) or joint ventures, which offer relatively large aid component in form of concessionary interest rates and grant elements. To gain a foothold in Nigeria's Western dominated oil sector, China promised to build and launch a communication satellite for Nigeria. In 2005 an US\$800 million deal was signed between both countries for the supply of 30,000 barrels per day (bpd) of crude oil to China. China agreed to provide a US\$4 million infrastructure investment package in exchange for first refusal rights on four oil blocks in Nigeria (Forestal, 2008).

In 2006 the Intergovernmental Nigeria - China Investment Forum was created. The Obasanjo Administration at the time secured several oil blocs for China as part of its "oil for infrastructure" policy. The awarding of oil blocs included significant infrastructure building commitments from Chinese companies across various sectors. During this period China sought to increase its presence in Nigeria's oil sector and increase the share of its State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) in Nigeria's market (Mthembu-Salter, 2009; Akinterinwa, 2013). For instance, China's National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) secured four oil blocs in 2006: two oil production licenses in the Niger Delta (OPL 471 and OPL 298) and OPL 732 and OPL 721 in the Chad basin. In return CNPC promised to invest US\$2 billion in Kaduna's struggling refinery. CNPC failed to keep to its promise as no money was invested in the refinery up until the federal government of Nigeria embarked on a complete turn-around maintenance of the refinery in 2009 (Mthembu-Salter, 2009). The Kaduna refinery was in 2020 one of the four moribund refineries in Nigeria that have not produced any fuel in years leaving the country to depend on imported petroleum products (Izuaka, 2023). On 24 June 2009, China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation (Sinopec) announced that it would be buying Canada's Addax Petroleum for US\$7.2 billion. Addax was one of the largest independent oil producers in West Africa with extensive on-shore and offshore operations in Nigeria (Mthembu-Salter, 2009).

The Chinese national government is not alone in the pursuit of China's economic interest, provincial and municipal governments have often engaged with their counterparts in Nigeria to promote deeper cooperation. In 2006 Jiangsu province and Lagos State government signed a MoU to promote Lekki Free Zone. Henan province opened up discussions about setting up a Chinese bank in Nigeria. Sichuan province also signed a US\$50 million deal with Ogun State government to build a pharmaceutical manufacturing plant (Alden, 2007).

Many Chinese firms operate from free trade zones. These are purposefully built industrial estates located on the outskirts of several cities that are often overseen by Chinese led management teams appointed by Nigerian government officials. Increasingly these businesses are benefiting from a growing network of substantial commercial ties between Chinese provinces and some Nigerian States. The Lekki Free Zone is a 16500 hectares area about 60 kilometers east and central Lagos. In 2006 a joint venture with a Chinese consortium led by CCECC formed the Lekki Free Zone Development Company (LFZDC). The Chinese consortium owned 60 percent equity and the Lekki World Investment (LWI) owned 20 percent and 20 percent was left for Nigerian investors (Mthembu-Salter, 2009).

China's economic interest in Nigeria has come under fire recently from critics. China's economic interest is suggested to have a negative effect on Nigeria's economy. Scholars and professionals alike

suggest that China's economic interest has resulted in unequal exchange and unbalanced trade; dumping of inferior goods; suppression of local manufacturers, and unemployment. China's economic interest in Nigeria has also been criticized for sharp practices that include illegal mining, illegal logging, illegal fishing and bribery (Page, 2018).

A director at the Institute for the Analysis of Global Security, Gal Luft, criticized China's business practices in Africa thus:

The Chinese are much prone to do business in a way that today Europeans and Americans do not accept - paying bribes and bonuses under the table. It will be much easier for some African countries to work with Chinese companies, rather than American and European companies, which are becoming more and more restricted by the publish what you pay initiative and calling for better transparency (Luft cited in Uchehara, 2009, p.107).

Chinese business people readily use bribes to facilitate their business activities. According to the Environment Investigation Agency, Chinese timber trade use Nigerian middle men to quietly harvest millions of dollars worth of rosewood each year. Rosewood is endangered hard wood specie found in Taraba, Kogi, Kaduna and Adamawa States of Nigeria. In 2017 the Nigerian government cracked down on one of the largest of these illegal mining operations at Kampanin Zurak in Plateau State. Sixteen Chinese nationals were arrested for illegal extracting about US\$278 million of lead, zinc and other ores for several years (Page, 2018).

Unequal exchange and imbalance have characterized China's trade with Nigeria over the decades. Nigerian exports to China comprise of natural resources of which oil was the most prevalent commodity. China on the other hand exported a range of goods that included textiles, electronic gadgets, motorcycles and electricity generators (Mthembu-Salter, 2009). In 2013 China's export to Nigeria was estimated at US\$3 billion, while Nigeria's export to China was US\$1 billion. There was a trade deficit of US\$2 billion (Agubamah, 2014). Between 2013 and 2016 Nigeria had a trade deficit of approximately 6 trillion with China. The total imports from China were 6.41 trillion and Nigeria's export to China was 714.97 billion (Page, 2018, p. 21).

Chinese exports to Nigeria have been criticized of costing Nigeria 350,000 jobs directly and 1.5 million indirectly from 2000 - 2005 (Uchehara, 2009). The influx of cheap goods from China has displaced local manufacturers. From 2010 to 2014 China's textile export to Nigeria grew by 222 percent. This adversely affected the textile industry in Nigeria. In the 1980s there were over 175 textile plants in Nigeria with approximately 250,000 employees. In 2007 there were only 26 textile plants in Nigeria which employed 24,000 employees (Umejie, 2015).

China's security interests in Nigeria are closely linked to its trade and investment interests, reflecting both Nigeria's challenging investment environment as well as the inherent constraints of Beijing's non-interference policy. China prioritizes the security of its citizens and investment in Nigeria. In 2006 militants associated with the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) specifically warned against Chinese involvement in the Niger Delta. Following a car bombing in April 2006, MEND warned the Chinese government to steer clear of the Niger Delta. In the Niger Delta militants kidnapped 16 Chinese oil workers in three separate incidents (Forestal, 2008). In 2018 four employees of a Chinese construction firm were kidnapped and ransomed in Kogi State. In recent years four Chinese had been fatally attacked: one by criminals in Nasarawa State in 2016, one by

unknown gunmen in Kaduna State in 2014 and two by insurgents in Bornu state in 2012 (Page, 2018).

China security interest in Nigeria was governed by economic concerns. The notion was that a safer and secure Nigeria is good for business. China believes that there existed nexus between security and development in Africa. For China an improvement in the livelihoods of Nigerians would lead to less security concerns. China believes that creating more jobs, reducing poverty, implementing more development projects are strategies for preventing insecurity (Benabdallah, 2016).

China is interested in Nigeria's political support in the international community. China's Nigeria policy is hinged on the principles of sincerity, friendship and equality; mutual benefit, reciprocity and common prosperity; mutual support and close coordination; and learning from each other and seeking common development. Under the principle of mutual support and close coordination, China required Nigeria's cooperation in the UN and other multilateral system. The goal is to support each other's just demand and reasonable propositions and continue to appeal to the international community to give more attention to questions concerning peace and development (Nwachukwu, 2017).

China needed Nigeria's support in the early 1970s to win its campaign for a seat in the UNGA and the UNSC. During the Cold War, the People's Republic of China (PRC) was excluded from the United Nations between 1949 and 1971. In 1971, the 26th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted Resolution 2758 admitting the PRC into the UN and expelling Taiwan (Niu, 2018). Nigeria was one of such African countries that voted in affirmation for the Resolution.

Nigeria's voice and might is also needed in other parts of Africa. It is believed that China's successful relations with Nigeria would go a long way in boosting cooperation with other African countries. Nigeria as a country cannot be ignored in Africa. It has been described as a gateway to Africa (Akinterinwa, 2013).

Nigeria was a valuable political friend to China in regional and international forums. Nigeria usually votes in tandem with other African countries and this bloc votes correlates with China's votes in international bodies. As a steadfast supporter of the 'One-China Policy', Nigeria has served on the UNSC more times than any other African nation (Page, 2018).

China required Nigeria's continuous support for the One-China policy and support against those condemning China's human rights records. The One-China Policy is the diplomatic acknowledgement of China's position that there is only one Chinese government. Under the policy, the countries recognize and have formal ties with China rather than the island of Taiwan, which China sees as a breakaway province to be reunified with the mainland one day (BBC, 2021).

Nigeria voted against the anti-China procedural motion by the US at the UN on 8th October, 1960. In 2019 Nigeria joined 36 other countries to praise China's remarkable achievement in human rights at a time when Western countries strongly condemned China's policy towards the Uighurs in Xiangjiang China reciprocated Nigeria's support in the UN by voting in favor of Nigeria for a permanent seat on the UNSC in 2015 (Jackson, 2019).

China is interested in building communities of practice through its relations with Nigeria. Communities of practice refer to networks of individuals, organizations, and institutions that share common interests and engage in ongoing interactions to promote cooperation and learning. China is interested in building communities of practice in its relations with Nigeria is part of a broader strategy

to expand its influence in Africa. China builds communities of practice in its combination of aid, trade, investments, security and cultural exchange to create a policy of mutual benefit and development (Obuah & Ijuye-Dagogo, 2022).

China's diplomatic practice involved high profile visits to build a sense of kinship with Nigeria. China also utilizes public diplomacy to influence the perceptions of the ordinary African. China also used public diplomacy tools such as its media agencies to endear itself to the Nigerian public. In addition to this China played a role in providing the technology and infrastructure necessary to receive such broadcasts and transmissions. China also encourages the practice of provincial level diplomacy to allow sub-national units to conduct diplomacy with Nigeria. In terms of trade China provides the necessary infrastructure to facilitate trade in Nigeria. Aid is used as tool to facilitate Chinese investments in Nigeria. China's cultural exchange through scholarships does not promote brain drain due to strict visa policies that mandates the scholarship beneficiary to return to Nigeria upon completion of the program (Obuah & Ijuye-Dagogo, 2022).

China has been actively seeking to build communities of practices with Nigeria. In a joint statement released after a meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari in 2018, the two leaders emphasized the importance of building a community of shared future for China and Nigeria. They also stated the need to strengthen cooperation in infrastructure, trade, investment, and people-to-people exchange (Xinhua, 2017).

### **Comparative Analysis of the US and China's Interest in Nigeria**

There are a number of similarities and differences between US and China's interest in Nigeria. The US and China appreciated Nigeria's strategic importance in regional and global issues. US interest in Nigeria was more elaborate and diverse than China's. It covered trade and investments, security, democracy and human rights and the geopolitical importance of Nigeria. On the other hand China's interest in Nigeria was primarily focused on trade and investment and political support at international organizations such as the UN. Security concerns were only as far as they affect China's economic interest in Nigeria. China was averse to concerns of democracy and human rights because of its long-standing policy of non-interference.

Both countries considered Nigeria's natural resources to have economic significance. US and China's industrialization made the need for multiple sources of raw materials and energy very important. Nigeria's crude oil exports to the US and China made up a large percentage of total trade between both countries. In 2019 88 percent of Nigeria's export to the US was crude oil and natural gas (Husted & Blanchard, 2020). Similarly, China invested 75 percent of its total investments in Nigeria in the oil and gas sector (Forestal, 2008).

However, Nigeria's trade with the US and China was unequal and, in some cases, unbalanced. The US and China export finished products such as refined petroleum products, vehicles, machinery, motorcycles, electric generators, textiles etc. to Nigeria in return for primary products such as crude oil, natural gas, cocoa, rubber, timber, iron ore, lead, and zinc. This trade relationship made Nigeria dependent on China and the US for finished products. On the other hand, there were differences in the balance of trade between the US and Nigeria and China and Nigeria. Balance of trade deficit between the US and Nigeria mostly favored Nigeria. In 2000 total exports from Nigeria to the US stood at US\$7.9 billion while imports from the US were US\$514.5 million. There was a trade deficit of US\$7.42 billion in favor of Nigeria. Conversely in 2013 China's trade surplus with Nigeria was

US\$1.09 billion (Gold & Devadson, 2015). China exploited Nigeria's large market to dump its manufactured products.

The US security concern in Nigeria was focused mainly on countering terrorism to ensure the security of its citizens at home and abroad. The US believed that Nigeria's security challenges can become a threat to American lives and property at home and abroad. This was made clear when Nigerian born Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab attempted to bomb a plane flying from Amsterdam to Detroit. The US believed that Nigeria's security apparatus is ill equipped to tackle insecurity and invests heavily in provided equipment and training (Husted & Blanchard, 2020). China on the other hand in line with its non-interference policy, was only concerned with Nigeria's security so far it affected its investments and other economic interests in the country.

The US was concerned with Nigeria's democracy and human rights. The US recommended democracy as a panacea for development. The US actively promoted its liberal ideals to Nigeria and condemns any act of human rights violation. This was exemplified in the US condemnation of the decision of Babangida to annul the June 12 elections and the Abacha unjust execution of nine Ogoni activists. President Obama's call for LGBTQ rights in Nigeria also fell under the purview of US interest in democracy and human rights. The US attempted to shape Nigeria to be more like it as a way to secure current and future economic gains. China on the other was not interested in Nigeria's domestic politics. China does not actively promote its brand of socialism to Nigeria. Its concerns are purely economic and not political.

The US and China saw Nigeria as a potential regional hegemon and a gateway to Africa. The US understands that Nigeria's large population and political role in Africa made it a valuable ally. Successful relations with Nigeria can serve as a model for other African nations. The US aimed to protect Nigeria from Chinese encroachment in its sphere of influence. China on the other hand did not actively ward off competitors in Africa. China only needed Nigeria to support its One China policy and avoid dealings with Taiwan. China counted on Nigeria's support in international organizations such as the U.N.

### **Conclusion & Recommendations**

The US was interested in Nigeria's economy, security, democracy and human rights, and geopolitical position. In terms of economy, the US sought to secure access to Nigeria's oil. As a supposed vanguard of democracy, the US was interested in the promoting democracy and respect for human rights in Nigeria. The US was also interested in the leadership role Nigeria played in Africa. Equally the US was concerned with China's increased penetration of Nigeria. The US feared that China reduced its influence in Nigeria. On the other hand, China was interest in Nigeria's economy in terms of access to natural resources and market. China's concern for Nigeria's security was a product of its concerns for the safety of its investments and citizens in Nigeria. China was also interested in Nigeria's support in the international arena. China seeks to create communities of practice in its diplomatic, economic and cultural relations with Nigeria.

This study concludes that foreign aid is not a product of altruism. It is not the product of the benevolence of the donor to the recipient. Foreign aid is a product of the donor's national interests. Despite other secondary interests, the US' and China's aids to Nigeria were motivated primarily by economic interests. The US and China were interested in the natural resources of Nigeria. This was reflected in the quantity of Nigerian crude oil exports to the US as well as US investments in Nigeria's oil sector. China needed Nigeria's natural resources to feed its industries. This suggests that the

Western rhetoric regarding China's hunger for Africa's natural was biased. This is due to the fact that both nations are interested in Nigeria's natural resources. As a matter of fact the US had more stakes in Nigeria's oil sector than China. China was more interested in market access in Nigeria than in its natural resources.

This study makes the following recommendations:

- i. Nigeria should assess the cost and benefits of aid receipts from the US and China to ensure it meets its own strategic interests.
- ii. Nigeria should ensure that its aid requests from the US and China are directed towards its own economic interests such as improving manufacturing and trade.
- iii. Nigeria should see the US' and China's aids as short term and terminal. It should acknowledge that its development needs cannot be achieved with only foreign aid.

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