THE POLITICAL TREND IN CHINA – NIGERIA EXTERNAL TRADE RELATIONS, 1999 – 2021

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ABSTRACT
This paper examined the political trend in China – Nigeria external trade relations, 1999 - 2021. The general objective of this paper was to offer explanation regarding the dynamics shaping external trade relations between China and Nigeria. The paper adopted qualitative method of collection and data were source from archival and documentary sources which comprised of online and print scientific journal articles were included and excluded based on China-Nigeria external trade relations. The study findings revealed that there is significant evidence suggesting that politics at the international and domestic levels are interlinked and have also played a critical role in shaping the trends of trade between both Nigeria and China. In conclusion the paper revealed that politics has had an important role to play in the synthesis of the trends of trade relations between China and Nigeria. The dynamics of these interconnected political factors therefore offer a fuller explanation for the subsisting trade imbalance between both countries, growing trade notwithstanding. The paper therefore recommended that grassroots avenues of China-Nigeria interaction for trade should be created, sustained, and improved both in China and Nigeria.

Introduction

International trade in contemporary times is a concept that has become quite immersed in complexity. Unlike the relatively trouble-free dynamics of commerce within the state, trade across borders and in-between states has become quite multiplex (Abegunrin, 2021). An in- depth understanding of the burgeoning web of interconnected factors that affect the conduct of international economic relations between countries today is one that has as a crucial feature, the role of competing agendas among national and international actors, and how the actions ensuing from the competing agendas of these actor's influence and shape trade relationships. These competing agendas, which Laswel (1936) conceptualizes as politics that which concerns, among other things, the allocation and distribution of wealth and power transcend the purview of the state and spills over into global politics. Moreover, the dynamics of politics and its multipronged role in shaping international trade relations can be described as reciprocal and not just unidirectional. It is plausible to contend therefore that politics

shapes international trade relations, and international trade relations, in turn, inform the changes in the calibration of politics. Indeed, the reciprocal influence of politics on trade and vice versa is defining more and more the very substance of those salient issues surrounding how international trade is conducted today, the actors who engage in it, how they engage in it, as well how these dovetail with or are hindered by the collision between domestic political pressures and international trade diplomacy (Woolcock, 1999).

The interface between politics delineated as those competing agendas at the systemic, interstate and intra-state levels of intellectual interrogation and international trade diplomacy, often defines the crux of external and multi-lateral trade relations. This trad Perhaps one of the more epochal as well as intriguing examples in recent decades; the rise of China, whose economy boomed at the behest of the Open-Door policies of Deng Xiaoping, as well as the country's ability to impose its political and economic will in the international arena, represents an interesting case in hand in contemporary IPE analysis. (Alves, 2021).

The above issues emanating from the decisions taken by both countries as substantive actors therefore, which stretch from the systemic, inter-state, and intra-state levels of analysis the role of the changing international system; the role of both countries' leadership styles which is a reflection of both countries' domestic realities constitute important points of inquiry regarding how competing agendas at the global and domestic stage has shaped the trend and nature of trade between both countries. Indeed, any analysis that synthesizes the above issues through the multi-perspectival analytical traditional of International Political Economy would undoubtedly furnish a fuller and richer account of the evolution of China-Nigeria trade relations over the period of 1999 to 2021. An international political economy approach therefore, which looks at the above complexities at the systemic, interstate and intra-state levels of analysis suffices in this academic inquiry in that it would offer an eclectic descriptive analysis of China-Nigeria trade within the given time boundary. Hence, this approach should offer in-depth, rich, and holistic explanation from the perspective of politics regarding why both countries' trade trend from 1999 to 2021 has evolved the way it has, as well as offer in-depth context on ways which this understanding will mitigate the challenges militating against healthier and reciprocal trade relations and in so doing, improve trade relations. This summarizes therefore, the background and rationale of this paper.

Statement of the Problem

From the foregoing therefore, the problematique of this research comprises a reconciliation of some of those salient questions and issues which have lingered with respect to the trends of trade between Nigeria and China. Not just trade, but trade relations between both countries. Particularly, as to why despite the claim of a win-win cooperation by China, trade imbalance from 1999 to 2021 persists. Additionally, as to why this win-win cooperation between both countries has occasioned Nigeria's strategic economic alignment with China who is not a traditional trading partner of Nigeria like nations in the West. The thrust of this problematique from the above therefore lies in explaining the role of politics at the international, systemic, and domestic levels of analysis in the synthesis and thus understanding of these aberrances. An in-depth discussion based on this problematique (as reflected in this research report) offered clarification with regard to the complex vagaries from the purview of competing agendas in the distribution and allocation of wealth. In so doing, it attempted to furnish a better understanding of this aspect of China-Nigeria relations. Also, this paper attempted to eliminate the inherent challenges based on such understanding.

Research Questions

In line with the above statement of the research problem, this research sought answers to the following research questions:

i. How has the trends of trade external relations evolved between Nigeria and China over the years?
ii. To what extent has Nigeria domestic politics leadership Style influenced the Country's external trade relations with China?
iii. What are the challenges confronting China-Nigeria external trade relations?

Objectives of the Study

i. Exam the trends of trade external relations evolved between Nigeria and China over the years.

ii. Assess the extent Nigeria domestic politics leadership Style has influenced the Country's external trade relations with China.

iii. Exam the challenges confronting China-Nigeria external trade relations.

Conceptual Review of Politics

Concepts help us to paint a mental understanding of our world whether it be palpable or purely abstract. They are general ideas about phenomena usually expressed in a single word or phrase (Atsiya, 2019). Some concepts are apt while others are hazy; some are precise, while others 17 are conjectural and contestable. Arguably, one of such conjectural and contestable concepts in the social sciences which is one of our primary variables in this research is that of 'Politics'. Indeed, it is worthy of note to point out, as Heywood (2013:2) succinctly does, that '"'Politics' with the capital 'P' refers to the academic study of politics, while 'politics' refers to the meaning of politics''. Our focus here is analyzing the meaning of politics. One of the broad ways which politics can conceptualize is to see it as a social and public activity (Czajka, 2016).

Concept Analysis of International Trade

International trade, the exchange of goods and services between two or more countries, as well as the forces that affect trade alliances, trade agreements, decisions on free trade and tariffs, inter alia, which are usually entrenched into the wider body of a coherent foreign economic policy, all culminate in the ability of states to marshal political instruments of power and statecraft at the utmost levels so as to manoeuvre through the complex realities at the ever-fluid global arena. But a proper understanding of how politics shapes, influences and impacts on international economic relations in general, and international trade relations would be very vital for any nation in the conduct of savvy and effective relations, which, in the case of this study, concerns the politics of Nigeria-China trade relations (Oigbochie, 2024).

Conceptualization of Politics and International Trade

Current research in international political economy (IPE) tend to focus on the impacts of globalization within the larger framework of how it influences transnational economic flows, and how these have generated newer issues and actors which state governments have to grapple with. These new intellectual interests on issues such as giving greater focus to the activities of Transnational corporations, transnational economic agents such as international economic organisations, and transnational economic machineries such as GVCs and GPNs are robust and interesting (Ayodele, 2014). In the area of economics, these evolving issues have stressed traditional international trade theories, for example, as political determinants are not fully accounted for in explaining the dynamics of international trade. More so, the peculiarities surrounding unique external trade arrangements is one that needs multidisciplinary attention.

Theoretical Framework: Complex Interdependence Theory

This theory is adopted for this study for the following reasons: The theory best explains the political economy of Nigeria China trade relations as it serves as an analytic tool that explains the eclectic link between political factors and economic factors. By so doing, the theory provides the context in exploring those salient trends which are underscored by politics at the inter-state level of analysis in China-Nigeria trade relations. Therefore, the theory is suited to the topic and problem area of this study. The theory also emphasizes the complex geopolitical considerations and dimensions of trans state relations, as well as the relatedness of events in the international arena. On this note, therefore, the theory is suited to research question two which explores the influence of international politics to China-Nigeria external trade relations (Ayoola, 2013).

Complex interdependence theory is also adopted for this research as it also reflects a deemphasis on generalizations, taking note of 'issue structure' analytical approaches. Furthermore, it recognizes the role domestic realities play in overall inter-state relations in the international system. Hence, the theory serves

as an analytic tool in explaining the issues raised in our research questions three and four which inquiries about the role of domestic politics by way of the leadership styles on both the Nigerian and Chinese sides, on their external trade 80 relations. Lastly, the eclectic analytic tool of the theory is suited to research question five that seeks to point out the salient challenges bedevilling trade relations between both states in light of the political dimension of both countries trade relations, so as to proffer informed strategies on how trade relations can be improved upon. This is because the theorists posited complex interdependence as not only a theoretical framework that offers a fuller understanding of IR phenomena, but also one that seeks to resolve the issues that this fuller understanding reveals.

Research Method

The researcher collected secondary data from the archival and documentary sources on the other hand that they were systematically selected based on PRISMA templates, which enabled us to establish a step-by-step parameter for quality assessment, as well as ascertaining their relevance to the study. PRISMA stands for 'Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta Analyses'. Although PRISMA is mostly used in the reporting of systematic literature reviews in the health sciences, in recent times, its templates for identifying, screening, ascertaining literature eligibility and as well as literature inclusion has been adopted by researchers in other fields of academic inquiry (Liberatiet, 2009). Search strings for the selection of other online supplementary documentary sources from China, Nigeria, China and Nigeria, Clhina and Nigeria Relations, China and Nigeria Economic Relations and China and Nigeria Trade Relations. Digital libraries and search engines from which documents were assessed and obtained using the above search words include Scopus, Springer, Google Scholar, Libgen, and Jistor. Supplementary journal papers were sourced from a wide range of high quality online and print peer reviewed journals, including relevant and up-to-date print journals concerning China-Nigeria economic relations. The data from archival and documentary sources which comprised of online and print scientific journal articles were included and excluded based on PRISMA templates. Furthermore, supplementary archival data was also obtained from newspaper articles, books, and statistical tables relevant to Nigeria-China trade relations.

The Trend of External Trade Between Nigeria and China

Another trend that emanates in the analysis of China-Nigeria trade relations is the trend of economic collaboration as well as trade diplomacy. It is a well-known contention that the prevailing economic system is one woven in the liberal image of international capitalism, where the means and margins of production within and across borders are ever limited, and global value chains ever complicated and competitive. Indeed, Nicola Phillips avers, the dynamics of Global Value Chains (GVCs), and Global Production Networks (GPNs) shape the global economy; indicating the net-winners and the net-losers (Eleanor, 2021). Therefore, countries that muster up their comparative advantage so as to control these in the game of losers versus winners will always be at an advantage. Nevertheless, there is also the contention that countries such as Nigeria and China need each other. Arguably, Nigeria needs China more than China needs Nigeria. The question then arises; thus, given the strategic partnership between Nigeria and China, can one say that the trade posture between both countries is thin or thick? Nigeria's economic ties with China is one that has been sold as a win-win cooperation. At least this can certainly be argued to be the case from the stance of China when she designated Nigeria as a strategic partner. This is certainly also the sentiments of the President, China Chambers of Commerce in Nigeria, Ye Shuijin, who opined in an interview that economic relations between the two countries are not only cordial, but it is also substantively beneficial to both. In his words, there are about 160 Chinese firms operating in the country [Nigeria]. These firms have employed over 200,000 Nigerians. I believe the Chinese investment in Nigeria now is about $20 billion. Our workforce is 95 percent Nigerian (Hague, 2004).

The volumes of MOUs signed between the two countries on economic collaboration spanning a sizable chunk of Nigeria's sectors, as well as the billions of dollars invested in Nigeria by the Asian giant also gives credence to the above sentiment and demonstrates that the trajectory of this trend. As Ibonye (2021) suggests, the evolving external strategic partnership between the two countries in terms of economic exchanges is one is growing. Not only so, but it will also be beneficial to both Nigeria and China on the long run. Indeed, this

line of thought suggests that it would be in Nigeria's interest to take advantage of this cordial trend to not only partner with China, but, also to emulate the economic strategies that have transmogrified her economy seemingly overnight into become as formidable as it is today. A case in hand to buttress the argument above, yearly data from the Nigerian Office for Trade Negotiation (NOTN) as published in their 2021 Trade Data Quarterly Brochure shows that for the first, second and third quarters of 2021, China alone accounted for over 30 percent of all foreign imports into Nigeria in terms of goods, and has been top since 2017 except for Q4 of 2019 when the United States was first and this was due to the restrictions imposed on Chinese imports as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (NOTN TDQ, 2021; NBS, 2021).

Nigeria's Domestic Politics and China External Trade Relations

The Obasanjo Government, 1999 - 2007

Not least, as the eminent commentator on Chinese affairs, Gregory Mthebu-Salter contends, China's new orientation towards Africa in general and Nigeria in particular in the early 2000s (Mthebu-Salter, 2009). Following through on his peaceful relations with all nations' policy, the Nigerian President made state visits to China in 1999 and 2001. He also made further visits in 2005 and 2006. These visits, it is imperative to note, were substantive and signalled his administration's docility to respond to China's efforts to court the African regional power. More so, the improving relations between Abuja and Beijing had begun to yield results. In 2000, China's CCECC won a contract to construct 5,000 housing units in Galadimawa district, Abuja, which was the first of its kind, to serve as temporary residence for the international crop of athletes attending the 8th All African Games in the Nigerian capital. The following year, the two countries signed agreements on the establishment of a Nigeria Trade Office in China, anda China Investment Development and Trade Promotion Centre in Nigeria (Ibrahim, G.S., & Gimba, 2018) moves that clearly indicated the Obasanjo administration's openness to enhanced China-Nigeria external trade.

As Pat Utomi points out, the 'oil for infrastructure' policy was not simply a federal government policy; it also spilled over to the state government level. State governors also used this opportunity to lead individual delegations to China, seeking investment and development partnerships (Utomi, 2008). This is little wonder given that the general notion of 'China mania' within the country as at then bordered around Chinese aid and support. To the Obasanjo administrations' credit on China relations, a lot of contracts, aid and infrastructural deals were struck. This includes Chinese investment in the power generation, agriculture, road and railway, housing and telecommunication sectors. Whereas the argument can be made from the position of national interest that the Obasanjo administration was able to secure valuable and urgently needed Chinese FDI, which according to data from SAIS-CARI amounted to about $6.3 billion by the end of 2007, in terms of trade in goods, the administration performed dismally. Admittedly, back in 1999, the country was just recovering from crippling economic sanctions, and it had just come out of a regime that was not privatization friendly. Notwithstanding, after two terms, the administration was not able to effectively stimulate the private sector, neither was it able to diversify the economy a point which cannot be overemphasized given the dynamics of trade imbalance between both countries. In evaluating the argument therefore, of pundits who aver that China-Nigeria trade especially as guided by the Obasanjo administration's policy of 'oil for infrastructure', was bad business for the Nigerian economy, given the gapping and ever-widening trade imbalance since the incipience of external economic relations, it is imperative to note that China cannot be blamed for such trade imbalance. On their part, they were motivated to protect their national interest. Whereas credit should be given to the Obasanjo administration for the FDI inflows which were the fruits of the many MOUs signed between both countries, it was not made up for in any way, by external trade in goods, given that the administration was not able to fully unleash the economic potentials of the country. 158 In the final analysis given that Obasanjo's 'oil for infrastructure' policy and his 'Shuttle Diplomacy' to some extent influenced external trade between both countries by bringing in urgently needed Chinese FDI from 1999 to 2007 through the signing of multiple MOUs with China, his leadership style, to some extent, influenced the trajectory of China-Nigeria trade.

Yar'Adua's Political Administration

Due to the dearth of data during the short period of Yar' Adua's conservative presidency, it has been concluded that little was achieved in terms of external economic relations, especially given the fact that most of the oil for infrastructure' deals of the Obasanjo administration were either cancelled or suspended due to alleged non-transparency (Ikenberry, 2008). Nevertheless, the administration, whose policy implementation was cut short when the president died in 2010 recorded some achievement in China-Nigeria economic investments in terms of FDI. For instance, because of circumspection on the part of Chinese companies, China's CHINAPEC announced a $7.2 billion deal to purchase Addax Petroleum which was a well-established Canadian oil company in Nigeria at the time. Other deals on infrastructure suffered setbacks. For example, the Mambila project never kicked off as a result of funding issues. The details surrounding the percentage which the Federal government and China's Export Import Bank had to contribute for the project as at then had not been thoroughly thrashed out. On the trade front, while trade continued to grow between both nations, the year 2008 was particularly dismal for Nigeria in terms of trade deficit. Also, from 2007 to 2010, the country experienced consistent trade deficits.

The commodities traded were the same as during the former administration: oil products to China and a wide variety of finished products to Nigeria. Nigeria's inability to diversify the economy and revamp domestic production, the culprit for this. This then begs the question whether Nigerians were truly appalled with Chinese dumping of knockoff products or whether it was a bitter-sweet experience. Notwithstanding, from the position of National interest, it would seem to be the case that Yar' Adua's conservatism influenced the trajectory of Chinese investment given the cancellation of oil contracts. Perhaps, had the contracts been approved, the Kaduna refinery could have been operational by now thereby reducing Nigeria's dependence on foreign refineries. In the final analysis, it would be cumbersome to contend that his administration's leadership style meaningfully impacted on China Nigeria trade relations during his time as president because he passed away after three years. But from the little that can be evaluated, his administration did not do much.

The Goodluck Jonathan Government, 2010 - 2015

The leadership style that defined the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan was one that gave the impression of having evoked sentiments of unifying the various factions in the country. His administration inherited the deep-seated problems of the polity from domestic woes defined by massive unemployment to the deficiencies in Nigeria's infrastructure. More so, the country was yet to diversify the economy-a point that had been clamoured for by technocrats and intellectuals alike and was still heavily reliant on oil exports. These provide context for the President's drive to transform the economic outlook of the country. This was well articulated in his inaugural address when he described the new decade as one of development and transformation (Nwabia, 2018).

In terms of FDI, from 2010 to 2015, Chinese FDI inflow into various sectors of the economy immensely increased. This was owing to the many on-going infrastructural projects in various sectors. 167 In contrast, from 2003 to 2009, estimated Chinese FDI stock in Nigeria was $1.03 billion (Egbula, 2011). As can be seen in table 6, total new Chinese FDI inflows into the country during Jonathan's tenure amounted to $1.238 billion. This indicates that during the Jonathan administration, there was an upward trend in terms of Chinese FDI inflows into the country, further buttressing the point that external economic exchange increased during the Jonathan administration. Total Chinese exports to Nigeria from amounted to $39.6 billion. Total Nigerian exports to China amounted to $16.1. Thus, resulting in a $23.5 billion in deficit against Nigeria. However, when compared to the trade deficit of former administrations, and given the upward trend in FDI inflows from China, external economic exchange during the Jonathan administration was better off. Notwithstanding, the inability of his administration to diversify the economy so as to better position the country in external trade with China was a cause for concern. Still on the trade front, the administration's effort to dovetail Nigeria's interest with that of China from a position of national interest yielded significant results. In 2014, external trade between both countries surpassed external trade between Nigeria and her trade allies. While it could be argued that the United States discovery of Shale Oil reserves in 2013 contributed to the reduction of oil exports from Nigeria, it does not fully explain the rapid increase of China-Nigeria trade in 2014 a factor

which, in consideration of the foregoing, can highly be attributed to the explorative leadership style of aggressive economic diplomacy not only on the Chinese side, but also, of the Jonathan administration. In the final analysis, while many challenges vitiate China-Nigeria trade, the fact that Nigeria's economy remains largely dependent on oil remains a paramount concern. Given that both FDI inflows from China and external trade increased during his time as president, the evidence suggests that the leadership style of President Jonathan immensely influenced China-Nigeria trade relations (IMF, 2021).

Muhammad Buhari Political Administration, 2015 – 2021

After his ascendancy to the presidency, the new President, who ran on the mantra of 'change' from the outset, made it clear that his leadership style would be one defined by massive reforms, especially one that cracked down on all forms of corruption, insecurity and injustice. His inaugural address, many opine, hit all the right notes on the issues. Significantly, the avowed outlook of the new administration got the praise many observers in the West who were displeased with the state of insecurity in Nigeria based on the strategic implications of rising radical Islamic terrorism around the globe (Oigbochie, 2024). This is very important given the background of corruption which the former administration was blamed to have condoned, the dreadful insecurity ushered in by the radical Islamic sect Boko Haram especially of the kidnapping of the Chibok girls, and the sentiments of dissatisfaction among Nigerians of the many domestic's problems bedevilling progress and prosperity.

External economic relations between Nigeria and China during his time in office has also been topsy turvy. After the completion of the Kaduna railway which really kicked off during the previous administration, China-Nigeria economic relations at the federal level have been mostly loan-based. In 2018, the administration obtained a loan of $328 million from China which it explained was to be used in upgrading the country's telecommunications and IT infrastructure. Specifically, the National and Communication Technology Infrastructure Backbone (Turcsanyi, 2019). Also in 2017, the administration sought to borrow $5.85 billion from China to be used for the modernization the of rail networks in country (Reuters, 2017). Furthermore, in 2016, the president also sought a loan of $6 billion for other infrastructural projects (Adunbi& Stein, 2019: 5). Fairly recently in 2021, the Nigerian senate approved yet another loan of $17 billion from China, most of which would be used to service the lingering Mambila Power Project which President Xi approved back in 2016.

Challenges Confronting China-Nigeria External Trade Relations

The following are the challenges confronting China-Nigeria external trade relations;

Trade Deficit

In the case of China-Nigeria external trade, the evidence from time series data clearly shows that since 1999, Nigeria has suffered a consistent and widening trend of balance of trade deficits with China as a result of mostly one-way trade. It is important to note that according to the data from IMF DOTS (2021), no year was an exception. From 1999 to 2019, available data shows that gross trade deficit with China stood at $68.4 billion. More so, the trade deficit has been growing at an alarming rate of an average of 8 percent each year, with an average annual trade deficit of $2.8 billion. This also underscores that fact that Nigeria is yet to penetrate the immense opportunities which the Chinese market offers. What is more, the inflow of FDI from China has not been able to supplement this widening trade imbalance. According to available data from SIAS-CARI total Chinese FDI stock from 2003 to 2017 amounts to about $19.6 billion This figure is only $28.5 percent of the total trade deficit with China.

Ill Treatment of Nigerian Nationals in Nigeria and China

Another issue which constitutes a challenge to China-Nigeria trade relations is the bad treatment of Nigerians not only within the Nigerian state where Nigerians work in Chinese companies, but also, in China. An empirical study by Charles Okafor in 2011 of some Chinese companies in Nigeria revealed that Chinese companies domiciled in Nigeria meted out bad treatment to Nigerian nationals. His study came to the conclusion that many Chinese companies tend to maintain harsh labour practices for Nigerian staff. What is more, the study also garnered that most Nigerian nationals are also discriminated against, as they tend to favour

offering job positions to Chinese nationals in Nigeria (Oke, 2019).

Restricted Knowledge Transfer

Closely related to the above is the issue of restricted knowledge transfer between Nigerian nationals working in Chinese companies, and Chinese nationals. According to an exhaustive 2016 survey by Yunnan Chen and others, it was discovered that only few Nigerians occupied managerial positions in Chinese companies within the country. This is significant because it is in such positions that knowledge transfer can effectively happen. This is because it requires specialised training to occupy such positions. Similarly, the study also submitted that there was little to no evidence of systematic skills and technology transfer in all of the companies sampled across the country (Oatley, 2021). This is supported by Ibonye's study (2021), which establishes that the goings on in many African domiciled Chinese companies betrays the cooperative conceptualization of China-African relations, as portrayed in the FOCAC, and rather seems to establish a China-centric module of globalisation.

Poor Nigeria Infrastructure

The state of poor infrastructure in Nigeria is another crucial challenge to the efficiency of external economic ties between China and Nigeria. The state of infrastructure in Nigeria is poor, especially when compared to other countries. Indeed, as a result of the dynamics of globalization, the limits of the economic outlook of any country with poor infrastructure is ever shrinking. Studies have linked poor infrastructure to lethargic economic growth and sustained underdevelopment. In fact, many scholars agree that one of the main reasons why China leaped from a poor aggregation society into becoming the largest economy in the world today is attributable to their aggressive revolution in infrastructure; from state-of-the-art roads, railways, airports, hospital, and housing to sustainable power generation distribution, which has helped to boost their industrial output. In all of the above-mentioned sectors, Nigeria is lagging far behind.

Findings

With respect to the first objective of this paper revealed that within the timeframe of 1999 to 2021, three main trends have stood out: an upward trend of FDI inflows into various Nigerian sectors from China, a sustained trend of balance of trade deficits and its accoutrements against Nigeria, and a sustained trend of efforts at external collaboration and trade diplomacy.

Secondly, analysis indicates that former President Buhari's administration focused more on financial credits from China over oil contracts and Chinese FDI. This was established on the grounds that compared to his predecessors, his administration recorded the highest inflow of Chinese financial credits which indications show is likely to increase. Still, his administration was nevertheless unable to ameliorate the sustained trend of trade deficits with China. The general import of the role of Nigeria's domestic politics as it relates to the country's leadership style on both country's trade relations is significant.

Thirdly, while both countries have set out to engage in robust economic coordination as spelt out in their strategic partnership, analysis shows that the challenges bedevilling external trade, which ranges from the trade deficit, infrastructural paucity in Nigeria, ill-treatment of Nigerian nationals in China and Chinese companies in Nigeria and Chinaphobia' among Nigerian policy makers and intellectual alike have to be decisively addressed so as to immensely improve trade relations between both countries

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the paper findings the research made the following recommendations on the political trend of China-Nigeria external trade relations.

Given that it was found that the trends of trade between both countries are mostly benign, this study recommends that all means of maintaining, and even improving external economic cooperation between both countries should be pursued and enhanced. This can be achieved through implementing policies such as cultural exchanges, enhancing the Nigeria China Trade office, and holding special joint China-Nigeria trade workshop which will strengthen and exemplify the strategic partnership which both countries have.

Similarly, Nigerian political elites should tap from the wealth of experience of past leaders so

as to ascertain the best pragmatic means of engaging China. This is based on the findings that show that Nigerian presidents have struggled regarding a workable foreign trade policy towards China. Given that the 'oil for infrastructure' policy of the Obasanjo administration achieved little given that China does not depend on Nigeria for its oil supplies in Africa, which also dovetails with why the subsequent 'oil for cash' policy of the Yar' Adua administration also failed, subsequent administrations must re-strategies and take oil off the table. Subsequent administrations should focus on areas which serve Nigeria's best interest such as engaging China in areas such as technology transfer.

More so, on account of the findings which are corroborated by previous studies on the growing trend of trade deficits on the part of Nigeria, the Nigerian government should diversify its economy away from the fracking of fossil fuels. This is ever more critical now when alternative means of power generation has drastically driven down the profitability margins of oil exports and given that oil products represent the major Nigerian export commodity to China. Although recommendations which point to alternative sources of national income such as bolstering the agricultural and the manufacturing sectors are germane, this paper strongly recommends that the Nigerian political elite enact policies which also focus on the service sector which driven by globalisation, equally holds immense economic potentials for the country. This should provide the country with critically needed leverage, as well as alternative trade options which should reduce and even reverse the trend of trade deficits with China and ensure optimum economic benefit for Nigeria.

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