

NIGERIA AND TAIWAN: THE EVOLUTION AND DYNAMICS OF A RELATIONSHIP; 1960-2020.

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ABSTRACT

This work, examines relations between Nigeria and Taiwan at both formal and informal levels, since attainment of independence in 1960 to 2020. It argues that though Nigeria and Taiwan have never been engaged in full bilateral diplomatic relations, gainful economic engagements have always ensued between the two countries, leading to the establishment of partial ties in 1991. The Cold War rationales and the emergence of the Peoples Republic of China as a global player are highlighted. The study examines Nigeria's effort to maintain economic and cultural ties with Taiwan without antagonizing the Peoples Republic of China, her major trading partner in South East Asia, whose principal aim is for Nigeria to end all forms of relations with Taiwan. This work explores the ever-changing dynamics of Nigeria-Taiwan relations in the face of hostilities from the Peoples Republic of China (PRC). It beams illuminating searchlight on Nigeria-Taiwan ties from 1960-2020 and concludes that in spite of challenges, both Nigeria and Taiwan have benefited immensely and are continuously harvesting sweet fruits of their unique ties.

INTRODUCTION

Taiwan is an Island nation located in South East Asia. It is the seventeenth most densely populated country in the world with a population density of about 651 inhabitants per square meter. Taiwan is one of the economic giants in South East Asia popularly refers to as Asian tigers. On the other hand, Nigeria is a country



located in West African. With enormous resource endowment, Nigeria is often referred to as the “Giant of Africa”.

The first official contact between Taiwan and Nigeria took place in early 1960, shortly after Nigeria’s independence from British rule. A special delegation from Taiwan that included Tan Chi-Iseng, Minister of Economic Affairs and Vice Foreign Minister H K Tang, visited Nigeria to discuss issues of mutual interest and was warmly received by the Belewa government. (NAK/kadprof file No: 4659) Nigeria and Taiwan connection started as early as 1960’s when the World Bank endorsed a Taiwanese scientist, Sun Yun-Suan, the then leading personality in the Taiwan Power Industry, to work as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and General Manager of the Nigeria’s Electricity Corporation between 1964 and 1967. The absolute aim was to revive the power sector in Nigeria. The Sun’s engagement ensured additional amount of the electricity generated in the County by around 87 percent, therein. (Yueh, Jean. 2009)

The newly independent Nigeria was desirous of learning from Taiwan’s experience. Taiwan emerged from Japanese colonialism in 1949. Between 1949 and 1960, Taiwan had developed from agrarian economy to an industrial society.

In the early 1960’s, Taiwan entered a period of rapid economic growth and industrialization called “The Taiwan Miracle”. During fifty years of Japanese colonial rule in Taiwan (1895-1945), Japan implemented the policy of industrialization and modernization in Taiwan. As noted by Emmanuel Pastreich, Japanese intentions were to turn Taiwan into a showpiece ‘model colony’ with much effort made to improve the island’s economy, public works, industry, cultural Japanization and to support the necessities of Japanese military aggression in the Asia Pacific. (Pastreich, Emmanuel; 2003). When Japan withdrew from Taiwan in 1945, the Republic of China (ROC) government of Chang Kai-Shek that



assumed the reins of power in Taiwan, built on the industrialization and modernization policy bequeathed by the Japanese. In the late 1950's Taiwan became an economic power house in South East Asia. Nigeria, with colonial background had hope to benefit from Taiwan modernization and Industrial advancement, but the reality of the cold war dictated otherwise. The Belewa administration did not establish bilateral diplomatic relations with Taiwan. The newly independent Nigeria was more interested in technology transfer, industrialization, expansion of international trade, mutual friendship and cooperation between friendly countries of the World than joining the ideological warfare between the East and the West.

A circular issued by the Ministry of External Affairs, Lagos to all Nigerian Missions overseas, dated April 21st, 1964, stated that, “as a result of recently increased pressures from both the Peoples Republic of China and the government of the Democratic Republic of China for contact with, and recognition by Nigeria, it has proved necessary to revise our position in relation to the Chinese. As a result of the examination, the Right Honourable Prime Minister has directed that, until further notice, Nigeria should not be associated in any way with either of the two regimes._ (Nak/EP4659)” This directive halted Taiwan's diplomatic overtures to establish bilateral relations with Nigeria during the post-independent period in Nigeria

The Establishment of Partial Relations in 1991

The year 1991 marked a turning point in Nigeria-Taiwan relations. After twenty years break in all forms of official contact, the two countries officially commenced trade and cultural relations. In April 1991, based on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that Nigeria and Taiwan signed in November 1990, to promote mutually beneficial trade relations, much to the relieve of traders, businessmen tourists and investors from countries. (NTCC, 2018).



Shortly after the official commencement of trade and cultural ties with Nigeria in April 1991, Taiwan offered thirty million United States Dollars Aid package to Nigeria (\$38million). The Aid package included: technical assistance, offer of programmes, transfer of agricultural technology, innovative farming technique, handicrafts, fishing mining, civil engineering and public health. This gesture was seen by keen watchers of events in the international scene as an attempt by Taiwan to lure her new friend Nigeria to accord her full diplomatic status.

Natasha Skidmore has pointed out that, ever since Taiwan lost its United Nations seat to the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1971, more and more countries have shifted official recognition from Taipei to Beijing, and fewer and fewer international organizations have accepted Taiwan's membership. One way in which Taiwan has tried to counter its diplomatic isolation is by channeling its economic strength and resources into assisting developing and developed countries, particularly in Africa. Its aid takes the form of technical assistance, training, donation humanitarian and disaster relief. Taiwan has therefore been utilizing its economic strength to break out of its present diplomatic isolation (Skidmore, N. 2012).

Benefits of Nigeria-Taiwan Relations

Relations between Nigeria and Taiwan have been mutually beneficial, with Nigeria benefitting more. In the absence of full diplomatic ties, the two countries were able to make the best use of the existing trade and cultural ties, to further their national interests. Nigerian trade with Taiwan expanded over the years with positive impacts on the Nigerian economy. Cultural engagement between the two countries equally yielded positive fruits for both countries. Taiwan investments in the Nigerian economy created employment opportunities for many Nigerians and assisted in no small measure to increase the country's Gross Domestic Products (GDP). It equally led to improved standard of living among others.



On the other hand, Taiwan relations with Nigeria greatly improved her visibility in the international scene, in the face of China's strong opposition and steady determination to limit Taiwan's international space. Taiwan agricultural and technical assistance to Nigeria greatly improved the agricultural sector of the Nigerian economy. Nigeria equally benefitted from transfer of knowledge and technology from Taiwan to Nigeria, with attendant positive effect on the Nigerian economy.

Since the establishment of partial ties between Taiwan and Nigeria in 1991 trade between Nigeria and Taiwan improved tremendously with Nigeria ranking as Taiwan's third largest trading partner in Africa, after Angola and South Africa" during the period of our study (Saner R & Yiu, T. 20:10).The flourishing trade between the two countries led to the establishment of Nigeria-Taiwan Chamber of Commerce and Industry; a bilateral chamber of commerce and industry established by eminent Nigerians in 2012 with the support of the Taiwan trade office in Nigeria. Establishment of the Chamber enabled its members to explore further and tap into the numerous business opportunities in the two countries. According to Taiwan Bureau of Foreign Trade, bilateral trade between Nigeria and Taiwan totaled 540 million US dollars in 2017, increasing 48.8 percent over 2016. Of this figure, Nigeria exports to Taiwan accounted for 44 million while Taiwan exports to Nigeria accounted for the remaining 98 million dollars. This indicated increasingly prosperous bilateral trade exchanges between the two sides. Nigeria Exports to Taiwan included; petroleum, petroleum products, cocoa, rubber and import machineries and parts, chemical products, auto parts and processed foodstuffs. (ROC Yearbook 2018). Both countries expanded bilateral trade and investments, especially in the field of information technology (ICT) energy, telecommunication and electronics. More than twenty Taiwanese companies and entities had presence in Nigeria, during the period of our study.



Emergence of Mixed-Race Nigeria –Taiwanese Generation in Taiwan.

One of the sweet fruits of Nigeria – Taiwan ties during the period of our study was the emergence of Taiwan’s first mixed – race generation with blood from Africa. Improved commercial transactions, socio-cultural interactions and people to people contacts resulted to marriages between Nigerian and Taiwan nationals. The relationship with Nigeria and Africa that Taiwan aggressively courted over the years produced unexpected return; the island’s first mixed race Afro – Taiwanese citizens.

With the normalization of trade and cultural ties between Nigeria and Taiwan in 1991, Nigerians traders, students, tourists, officials poured into Taiwan in large numbers. Improved people to people interactions culminated to Nigeria- Taiwan romances and marriages which resulted to the birth of mixed-race Afro-Taiwanese children. A group of Taiwanese with Nigerian heritage has emerged in the island nation. This development changed the fabric of cities of Taipei, Hainan, and New Taipei city in a way without precedent.

This has been described as a revolutionary development because, previously, most migrants in Taiwan often looked to assimilate quickly. They tend to learn Chinese and down play their culture at home rather than instilling it in their children. As more Nigerians and African men marry local Taiwanese women and set up families in Taiwan, the Afro Taiwanese community in Taiwan has progressively grew to unprecedented heights.

Once seen as a homogeneous society, Taiwan is beginning to think of the growing diversity of itself as multi–ethnic society, a concept that is reshaping Taiwan’s story of its basic identity.



The emerging Nigeria–Taiwan mixed race generation in Taiwan is part of the larger Afro – Taiwan mixed race community that is fast growing in Taiwan with revolutionary impact on the Taiwan society.

The high birth rate recorded among African-Taiwan couples in Taiwan injected new blood into the aging Taiwan population. Most Taiwan couples desire small families, African couples prefer to raise large families with three or more children. African immigrants export the culture to wherever they go. In Taiwan, most Nigerian couples and Africans in general living in Taiwan are raising large families. This has proved to be a positive development to the aging Taiwan population.

SUSTAINABLE GROWTH IN CULTURAL LINKAGES

Even though Nigeria and Taiwan have vastly different historical experiences, and cultural traditions, both countries have been remarkably successful in their efforts to promote sustainable growth in cultural linkages between the two countries. Nigerian-Taiwan collaboration in the cultural sector has produced positive results through successful Arts and cultural exhibition, media proliferation, students exchange programme and inter-racial marriages. Nigeria regular participation in cultural exhibitions in Taipei has succeeded in creating public awareness of the role of Art and crafts in national development. At such fora, creativity, indigenous skills and talents are displayed with a view of harnessing and updating them for contemporary usage and thereby encouraging the consumption of Made-in-Nigeria products. This has great potentials in contributing to our pursuit for sustainable economic growth. Nigeria's participation has greatly enhanced cultural exchanges between the two countries and raised standard for artistic creation. The National Council for Art and Culture (NCAC) had severally participated in many Arts and culture Expo in Taiwan. This development has assisted to a large extent to market Nigeria to the International Community. Apart from



becoming a sustainable foreign exchange earner for the country, it has succeeded in raising the profile of Nigeria as a major tourism destination in Africa. Many Nigeria Arts work now adorned offices and homes in Taiwan.

At individual level of participation, many Nigerian artiste have won laurels, Prizes and achieved global recognition from participating in renowned Taiwan arts and cultural Expo. In October 2019, famed 11-year-old Nigeria hyper-realist artist, Kareem Waris Olamilekan triumphed over 2,723 international candidates from all over the world to win Taiwan's 22nd Fervent Global Love of lives Award 2019' from Taiwan's Chou Ta-Kuan cultural and Educational Foundation. The young Nigerian artist used charcoal and pencil as the medium of choice for his paintings. He sketched a stunning portrait of French President, Emmanuel Macron, on the spot in just two hours, which amazed the global media. Using his impressive talent, Olamilekan beat all the participants in Taipei to clinch the coveted award. After he was announced as the winner, the award-winning artist to the global audience that he was motivated by the works of Michelangelo and his goal is to surpass the standard set by the great artist by using drawings to depict Africa vividly. It should be noted that the Taiwan's Chou Ta-Kuan cultural and Educational Foundation promotes' Global love of lives movement and recognizes that everyone is good at something Many people refer to the event as "the Nobel Prize of life". (Kiunguyu, K., 2019).

Karim Warris Olamilekan victory in Taiwan was a huge image booster for Nigeria in the international arena. Apart from Kareem Olamilekun's victory, other Nigerian artistes such as Emeka Ogboh, Jamilar Sabur, and Ugochukwu Smooth Nzewi have benefitted immensely from their participation in international cultural and Arts Expo in Taiwan in recent times. Apart from financial gains, they have succeeded in no small measure in expanding the tentacles of Nigerian Arts and culture to the Far East corner of the world.



The three decades of cultural cooperation has since witnessed several cultural activities and exchanges in Arts, music, dance exhibition, cultural administration, training and capacity building of cultural industry centers in Nigeria such cooperation have continued to make positive and far-reaching impacts on stakeholders of the sector in Nigeria.

The essence of cultural exchange is people to people exchange, which serves as a bridge, promotes the mutual understanding and mutual learning between countries. There can be no genuine development in a third world country like Nigeria with giving first consideration to agricultural development and cultural exchanges. Cross fertilization of ideas is a much-needed weapon to engender diversity and development.

Advancement of Economic Diplomacy

Economic diplomacy simply connotes the adoption of foreign policy instruments to achieve specific economic interests through decision making, policy making or advocacy. The driving motive behind Nigeria's relations with Taiwan has been mostly economical. Over the years, Nigeria has reaped bountifully from her ties with Taiwan.

Emergence of Industrial Clusters and general expansion of the economy in Eastern Nigeria.

The partnership between entrepreneurs in the south Eastern towns of Nnewi, Onitsha and Aba from the second half of the 20th century resulted to the establishment of Nnewi Automobile Parts industrial Cluster in Anambra State, the Awada Industrial cluster in Onitsha and Aba/Ariaria shoes and clothing factories. in the early 1980s, when Nigeria encountered economic hardship and scarcity of Foreign Exchange, the industrial exchange, the industrial clusters in Nnewi, Onitsha and Aba ensured import substitution and backward integration that helped to cushion the effect of the economic crisis in the country.



The industrial clusters in Onitsha, Nnewi and Aba **exported automobile** parts, rubber products, shoes, clothing materials e.t.c to countries in the West African Sub-region, as well as other international destination. Much of this success was due to the acquisition of skills by workers mainly through learning by-doing especially during equipment installation and test run, and through inter-firm linkage with foreign technology suppliers from Taiwan. As noted by Oyeleran Oyeyinka since the 1970s, local traders in Nnewi have transformed themselves into manufacturers of automobile parts through close linkage to technology suppliers in Taiwan. Seventeen firms, ranging in size from enterprises with **40 employees** to those with 250, supply Nigeria and other West African market with switch gears roller chains for engines, auto tubes, batteries engine seat, shock absorbers, foot rest and gasket for motorcycles, as well as other parts (Oyeleke, O. 2013). This development generated **employment for thousands** of Nigerians. It also enabled many Nigerian to acquire technical skills in industrial production. The Onitsha Industrial Clusters situated in Awada Layout in Onitsha comprised of about 75 industries and employed thousands of Nigerians. The Aba/Ariaria shoes and clothes factories provided employment to many and lubricated the Nigerian economy to a large extent.

In the absence of Diplomatic ties, Nigeria and Taiwan had through unofficial economic, commercial and cultural links as well as people to people contacts expanded and deepened ties substantially during the surveyed period with resultant benefits to both countries. It is a truism essentials such as motorcycle, television set, record changer (Vinyl) set, radio and tape records/players, cameras, public address system and other essential household appliances initially imported into the country mostly from Japan, Taiwan, China and Europe were grossly inadequate to meet the needs of the domestic economy.



Secondly, manufactured products from Japan, Western Europe and the United States of America were expensive and beyond the reach of most Nigerians. As more Nigerians acquire motor vehicles, motorcycles, bicycles and other automobiles in the 1970's demands for auto parts increased. Taiwanese manufacturers to be competitive against Europe and Japanese products offered Nigeria Importers lower prices and flexible credit arrangement as a result of these incentives Taiwan made products penetrated deeper into the Nigeria market.

Challenges of Nigeria – Taiwan Relations

Nigeria-Taiwan relations have been constrained by a number of factors. Among these are; Taiwan identity crises and controversy over statehood, Nigeria's "look east foreign policy, crime, dwindling value of the Naira and poor credit facilities, China's "Go Global Foreign Policy, the end of cold war and insurgency in Nigeria.

Taiwan Identity Crises and Controversy over Statehood

A major impediment to Nigeria-Taiwan relations is the controversy surrounding Taiwan status as a sovereign country in the global community of states. Nigeria became independent on 1st October, 1960 and received global recognition as the 99th member of the United Nations Organisation (UNO), Taiwan legally lost its statehood in 1971 when the global body expelled Taiwan in 1971 and admitted mainland China into the United Nations Organization as the bonafide representative of all China.

Since then, the People Republic of China which sees Taiwan as a renegade part of the country, has maintained a hostile attitude to any country that relate very closely with Taiwan as a state. With the Peoples Republic of China's growing influence in the global arena as a permanent member of the United Nation's Security Council (UNSC) and a major economic power in contemporary world, many countries including Nigeria became skeptical of



scaling up relations with Taiwan to full diplomatic level and recognizing Taiwan as an independent state, in order to avoid the wrath of China PRC. Internally, there is no real consensus within the country over the fundamental state of the country itself, with the country being divided between the two main factions, known as the Pan Blue Coalition and the Pan-Green Coalition.²³⁹ The Pan-Blue Coalition led by the Kuomintang party (Chinese Nationalist Party) favours closer relations with the PRC government in Beijing, reasoning that open communication and a strong trading relationship would deter potential aggression from the Peoples Republic of China (PRC)". On the other hand, the Pan-Green Coalition under the leadership of the Democratic Peoples Party (DPP) reason that their country Taiwan is limited to the geographical definition of Taiwan and does not claim any sovereignty over China. The DPP favours a declaration of independence, which would also involve renouncing Taiwan's claims on China proper (Yu, G & Congeneker, 1994).

In the year 2000, Chen-Shui-bien of the Democratic Peoples Party was elected and inaugurated as the president of Taiwan. The new President, a prominent leader of the pro-independence movement that sought to establish statehood for Taiwan embarked on practical moves to deepen Taiwan relations with Nigeria through improve trade and investment, education and people to people exchanges. Chen diplomatically influenced the movement of Taiwan Trade Mission in Nigeria from the nation's commercial capital Lagos, to the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja (Goldstein, Rox Chang J.).

The movement of the Taiwan Trade Mission from Lagos to the seat of Nigeria's Power in Abuja was seen by the People's Republic of China, as an attempt by Taiwan to surreptitiously seek full bilateral diplomatic relations with Nigeria. China protested to the Nigerian authorities about Taiwan's unwholesome activities, and demanded greater restrictions. Presence in Abuja was a privilege granted to



sovereign countries with full diplomatic relation. To effectively counter Taiwan move, The Peoples Republic of China employed her famous “checkbook diplomacy”. The PRC increased its investment, loan aid and assistance to Nigeria. From 1.36 billion dollars investment in 2003, trade between China and Nigeria rose to 6.46million–Dollars for just half of 2016” (NTCC Records, 2017). This was a giant leap compared to the 800 million Dollar Nigeria – Taiwan trade. Taiwan’s little economic leverage compared to China compelled the Nigerian authorities to dance to the Chinese tune of isolating Taiwan.

The election of the pro-independence politician Tsai Ing-wen in 2016 as president of Taiwan rekindled a diplomatic rivalry between China and Taiwan on the African continent and Nigeria in particular. The then president-elect Tsai Ing-wen, extended official invitation to Nigeria to attend the inauguration of the new president. The then Chairman Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Senator Biodun Olujimi attended the presidential inauguration in Taipei. China then initiated moves to limit Taiwan’s international space. Tsai’s party the Democratic People’s Party had traditionally expoused Taiwanese independence. The DPP favours a declaration of independence for Taiwan. President Tsai allegedly adopted a hostile attitude to mainland China.

To limit Taiwan international space, Beijing stepped up its campaign to isolate Taiwan internationally by diplomatically and economically pressuring governments and companies to recognize it as a part of China.

China, insisted that Nigerian side make good on its pledge to implement the “One China Policy” and carryout concrete and decisive measures to clear political obstacles to the development of bilateral relations.



In response to China's demand for greater restrictions on Taiwan's trade mission in Nigeria, the federal government of Nigeria ordered Taiwan to scale down its trade mission – which manages consular affairs as well as events like Trade delegations, explainers on Taiwan's fisheries or telecom industries, and art competitions – and move the office to Lagos where it will have less visibility. The trade mission, established in 1991, has supported Taiwanese investors and industrialists who have been manufacturing in Nigeria²⁴⁵. Apart from the federal government order for the immediate relocation of the Taiwan trade mission from Abuja, the Nigerian government also ordered the Taiwan trade mission to reduce its staff strength and change the trade mission name to "Taipei Trade Office" and stated categorically that the trade mission was not an embassy. To further placate China, Nigerian Foreign Minister Geoffrey Onyeama and his Chinese counterparts Wang Yi issued a joint statement January 11th 2017 that "The government of the Peoples Republic of China is the sole legal government representing the whole of China's territory" The government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria recognizes that there is only one China, and that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory.

The joint statement by the two governments highlighted the One China policy at the core of strategic partnership between China and Nigeria. The collaboration between the two countries effectively denied Taiwan the status of a sovereign state in her relations with Nigeria. The governmental so pledged to honour all agreements signed with the Peoples Republic of China (PRC). In the words of Nigerian Foreign Minister Geoffrey Onyeama "On the issue of building trust, the international community has embraced one China and China is a member of the United Nations and we don't want to leave any doubt on the issue. We adhere to it strictly.

Nigeria's "Look East" Foreign Policy

The view that a nation's foreign policy is a reflection of its domestic preoccupation and its perception of the intermediate



environment is a generally accepted position (Aworowo, D. 200). Political developments in Nigeria during General Sani Abacha's military rule in (1993-1998) inflicted a devastating blow on Nigeria-Taiwan relations.

The era of good feelings, socio-economic gains, mutual cultural exchanges, prospects and rapprochement, ushered into Nigeria-Taiwan relations since the signing of the memorandum of Understanding in 1990, received a terrible blow when the Nigerian government of General Sani Abacha strengthened bilateral diplomatic relations with the People Republic of China in 1995, much to the detriments of Taiwan. The decision by Gen Sani Abacha to scale up Sino-Nigeria ties gradually dimmed Taiwan's hope and expectations of normalization of full diplomatic ties with Nigeria during the Abacha dictatorship years (1993-1998), when western aid was cut-off from the international community, because of the human rights record of the regime, Nigeria adopted a "Look East" foreign policy which strengthened the Beijing-Abuja alliance, and built trust between the two countries. The regime of Gen Sani Abacha tactically and diplomatically brought the Chinese closer to Nigeria in 1995 to fill the yawning gap created by the isolation of the country by the United States of America and its western allies as a result of political crises engineered by the regime in Nigeria. Since China did not join the West in criticizing human rights abuses, killings and other tyrannical measures of the Sani Abacha regime, particularly the execution of environmental activist Ken Saro Wiwa and other activists, Abacha turned to China and relegated Taiwan to the bottom rung (Onanaiju, C. 2004).

Under Gen Sani Abacha, Sino-Nigeria relations expanded on growing bilateral trade and strategic co-operation. The then Nigerian Foreign Minister, Chief Tom Ikimi reaffirmed the one China policy and stated that Beijing was the only legitimate government representing the whole of China and Taiwan is an inalienable part of its territory. In reciprocation, China offered Nigeria mouthwatering deals in defence, transport and petroleum.



As observed by Jibrin Ibrahim “the long period of military rule left a deep scare on the nations domestic and external affairs. The lowest in Nigeria’s international relations was under Abacha. After the ratification by the Provisional Ruling Council (PRC) of the death sentence and the execution on November 1995 of nine Ogoni minority rights activists including writer and environmental activist Ken Saro Wiwa, just two days after a military tribunal passed the sentence on November 8, Nigeria was isolated by the international community. A retired Nigerian Diplomat Ambassador Mahmud Yahaya has noted that, the timing was a fatal blow to the nation’s foreign policy. This was at a time when the Commonwealth Heads of State and Governments were meeting in Auckland, New Zealand on November 10 1995 and against a worldwide appeal for clemency. Following this act, the Commonwealth immediately approved a two- year suspension on the country on the basis of the 1991 Harare Declaration. As a result, Nigeria became practically cut-off from its traditional allies, with the Abacha regime maintaining limited diplomatic contacts with them. The regime became defiant and adopted a paradigm shift by initiating new relationships with the Asian nations of China, North Korea, South Korea, Turkey, Indonesia and others.

In reciprocation of their new found friendship, China offered Nigeria lucrative deals in trade, economic and technical cooperation. China and Nigeria signed a number of agreements on trade, economic and technical cooperation, scientific and technological cooperation, as well as an agreement on investment protection. The two countries set up a joint economic and trade commission. The trade volume between the two countries in 2003 reached 1.86 billion dollars. In May 12, 1997, Nigeria & China signed agreements to establish Nigeria-China Chamber of Commerce. In May 1998, Nigeria Chief of General staff Rear Admiral Mike Akhigbe 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”²²⁸. This development further sealed the hope and



prospects of deepening ties with Taiwan. In the face of imminent isolation from the international community, China became Nigeria's bulwark of defence and dependable ally. To survive crippling economic sanctions imposed on the country by America and its western allies, China offered Nigeria investment packages valued in billions of dollars. In comparison, Taiwan a light weight in global community couldn't do much to help Nigeria. Taiwan grants, development projects and technical aid were paltry. Consequently, the Peoples Republic of China became Nigeria's most valuable diplomatic partner in the Far East. One of the elements of state power is a strong military. Taiwan is not military strong. It relies on the United States of America (USA) for supply of her military wares for defence against internal and external aggression. On the other-hand, China is strong a country with a strong military industrial complex. In the ongoing war against Boko Haram insurgency in North East Nigeria. China has rendered immense material and financial support to Nigeria's effort to end the festering insurgency not only in the north east but also to counter illegal activities of the militants in the Niger Delta. As the United States of America and her western allies dithered in selling military hardware to Nigeria to effectively confront the insurgency, citing Nigeria's poor human rights records, China came to Nigeria's rescue. China supported Nigeria's counter insurgency efforts, supplying military technology and sending military trainees to assist Nigeria armed forces in the effort to restore peace and normalcy in the country. Over the years, China has ceaselessly co-operated with Nigeria at the United Nations and other global bodies. In 2015, China endorsed Nigeria's bid to become a permanent member of United Nations Security Council, citing Nigeria's status as a leading developing country. This growing strength has added deep bond between Nigeria and China and obviously impacted negatively on Nigeria-Taiwan relations. Attention of Nigeria is focused more on Sino-Nigeria relations, apparently because of the multi-faceted benefits accruing to the country from China compared to Taiwan.



In 2017, in response to China's demand, the Nigeria authorities on January 2017 ordered Taiwan to relocate its trade mission from Abuja, the nation's capital to any other commercial cities in Nigeria. Despite its dwindling diplomatic fortune, Taiwan has been able to maintain economic and cultural ties with trade missions and cultural offices in countries that don't recognize Taipei. This unofficial relations has been the true lifeline for Taiwan's survival in the global community²³¹. To reduce Taiwan's presence in Nigeria, China demanded for greater restrictions on Taiwan trade mission and its officials. In pursuance of the move, China foreign minister Wang Yi visited Abuja in January 2017, and pledged 40 billion dollars in investment and projects for Nigeria.

To reciprocate the good gesture from China, Nigeria government deployed a detachment of armed mobile policemen to seal up the trade mission of Taiwan, located at Kastina Ala Street, Maitama Abuja. In response to the forceful relocation order from the Nigerian government, Taiwan foreign ministry said it strongly condemned the unreasonable and outrageous act of political hype carried out by Nigerian government in compliance with mainland China's political goals.²³¹ Diplomatic effort by Taiwan to persuade the Nigerian authorities to let the trade mission remain in Abuja proved unsuccessful. The Envoy sent by Taiwan to Nigeria to resolve the matter with the Nigeria authorities was not allowed access to relevant highly placed Nigerian government officials.

Taiwan moved its trade mission from Abuja to Lagos reduced the number of staff and effected the name change from Trade mission to Taipei trade office in Lagos in Feb. 2017. The movement dimmed Taiwan's pledge to consolidate its alliance with Nigeria and enthusiasm to strengthen bilateral relations with Nigeria. Lil Kuo has noted that Nigeria's tremendous gain from Sino-Nigeria ties informed her decision to walk the path of China more than that of Taiwan. Justifying Nigeria's increasingly pro-China posture, he posited that, Taiwan-Nigeria trade in commodities like natural gas,



industrial equipment, seafood and other products was just 800 million United States Dollars in 2015, a fraction of the 46 billion trade between China and Nigeria for just half of 2016.²³³ The volume of investment flowing from China to Nigeria has greatly eclipsed Taiwan's space in Nigeria. During the Chinese Foreign Minister Wangyi visit to Nigeria, to deal with the Taiwan's issue, he said that China had already invested about 45 billion dollars in various infrastructure projects in Nigeria before the new pledge of releasing another 40 billion dollars. Reaffirming Nigeria emphasis on China than Taiwan, Nigerian President, Mohamadu Buhari told, the visiting Chinese Foreign Minister Wang yi. That, the administration was very serious about infrastructural development. "We want road, power, and skill acquisition for our people. Now we have to collaborate with you and keep our side of the bargain in all agreements we have signed²³⁴ with the attention and focus of the Nigerian authorities now on the ever-increasing Sino-Nigeria ties, the once promising Nigeria-Taiwan relations takes the back seat.

Prof. Jide Oshuntokun has opined that, in today's world, no country desirous of growing her economy can ignore China in favour of Taiwan. China has emerged as an economic giant in the global arena. He argued that though there are much for Nigeria to learn from Taiwan economic miracle and development praxis China's investment in the Nigerian economy is massive. Apart from her heavy investment in Nigeria, China has become Nigeria's major ally and defender at the United Nations. Taiwan is a light weight, fighting for survival and recognition as a sovereign state.

In response to the hesitation of the United States and other Western countries to aid Nigeria in their efforts to combat insurgents in the oil-rich Niger Delta region, the Nigerian government has developed close military cooperation with China which has supplied arms, equipment, training and technology to the Nigeria armed forces. Both nations also signed US311 million agreement to develop cooperation in communications and space programs. China helped



developed and launched the Nigerian Communication Satellite (NIGCOMSAT) in 2007, to expand cellular and internet network in Africa. China supplied China-made drones to Nigeria to assist in the fight against insurgency. China supplied the CH-3 drones to Nigeria government prior to 2014, along with YC-200 guided bombs and AR-1 air to ground missiles. China also supplied the Nigerian Air force with Wing Loong II CH-4 and CH-3 drones.

In addition, July 2020, a secret loan agreement was signed between the two countries, with a clause that reads:

The borrower (Nigeria) hereby irrevocably waives any immunity on the grounds of sovereignty or otherwise for itself or its property in connection with any arbitration proceeding pursuant to article 8(5) thereof, with the enforcement of any arbitral award pursuant thereto, except, for military assets and diplomatic assets.

Though this clause sparked an outrage in Nigeria, with many Nigerians perceiving China as a new fully fledged colonizer of Nigeria by buying its sovereignty. China has invested 6.6 billion dollars in Nigeria following this exclusive deal. This is a far cry from Taiwan investment in the Nigerian economy.

Crime

Negative activities of criminally minded citizens of both Nigeria and Taiwan have constituted a serious drawback to the advancement of Nigeria-Taiwan relations. Taiwan is an industrial power with a saturated market and numerous finished products for exports. Due to the inadequacy of available capital to import these products in large quantities, most Nigerian businessmen engaging in the import trade with Taiwan often request for credit facilities from their Nigerian counterparts. In some cases, once the credit facilities are granted, they will betray the trust by not honouring the



agreements reached. Some have ended up in litigations with attendant consequences. For example, a 30-year-old Nigerian Gabriel Oluokun was on Thursday June 14th, 2020, convicted and sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment by Justice Joyce Abdulmak of the Federal High Court, Ibadan, Oyo state, for defrauding a Taiwanese to the tune of twenty-two thousand three hundred American dollars (\$22,300). The convict was prosecuted by the Ibadan Zone of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) on a six count amended charges of obtaining money by false pretense. According to the EFCC, the commission received a petition from one Nduka Lucius in which he alleged that the convict collected the sum of 22,300 dollars from him in three instalments on the agreements that he would supply 100 metric tonnes of sesame seed to one Victoria Xhuma, a Taiwanese business woman whom the petitioner represent in Nigeria. The convict failed to deliver the product as promised. Instead of returning the money, he converted the sum to his personal use.

In a similar manner, a Taiwanese national Foncair Sen accused of importing Cocaine into Nigeria without lawful authority was on 8th July 2011, sentenced to 30 years imprisonment by a Federal High Court sitting in Lagos, Southwest, Nigeria. His alleged conspirator, a Chinese national Richard Wang was also sentenced to 18 years imprisonment. The prosecuting authority in Nigeria, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) alleged that the convicts Sen imported the container in his company's name from Chile. In the bill of lading, the container was mischievously said to be containing cigarettes. According to the charge filed by NDLEA Assistant Director of legal Service, John Gima, the Taiwanese and his collaborator, between March and July 2010, at Ibadan and Kano in Nigeria and without lawfull authority conspired to import 450.44 kilogrammes of cocaine into Nigeria from the Republic of Chile (Punchng.com).

Numerous cases of this nature abound in Nigeria-Taiwan corridors, but Eze Amadi, a member of Nigeria-Taiwan Chamber of



Commerce has averred that activities of these criminal elements have resulted to deficit of trust among nationals of both countries, especially Taiwan business community. He noted that, trust is the soul of business. According to Amadi, in recent time past, you would go to Taiwan, buy four containers load of products and request for additional containers on credit, with a promise to pay once you dispose off the goods in Nigeria.

Taiwanese manufacturers would grant you the requests easily. But nowadays, due to the high rate of defaults and resultant losses incurred by the Taiwanese, they are now very skeptical about extending such credit facilities to Nigerian traders. Many Taiwanese businessmen have lost huge sums of money that runs into millions of dollars to fraudsters from Nigeria who posed as genuine businessmen.

In June 2010, Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs advised the public to take precautions and be careful against online scams. The warning came in the wake of fake Nigerian scams campaigns in which nearly 12 Taiwanese fell victims. In the light of these negative developments, Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs warned citizens of Taiwan against Nigeria Scams. In April 2010, Charles Chou Head of African section in Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) disclosed that the frequency at which Taiwanese were falling victim to the scam is substantially high. He revealed that there were many forms of Nigerian scams that originated in the early 1990s. These scams have become famous with a name of ‘419’ scam – an indication to the article of the Nigeria criminal code dealing with fraud. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs warned that the most common type of online scam that target Taiwanese is e-mail scam. The e-mail scam asks computer users to reveal their personal information and bank account information to share a big percentage of millions of dollars.²⁴⁹ The Ministry also highlighted that online scams carried out by Nigerians include online transactions wherein Taiwanese seller has catalogued items on



websites such as ebay and a buyer (based in Nigeria) places an attractive high bid. Charles Chou posited that the buyer (scammer) claims that the Nigerian regulations did not permit the money wire transfer internationally to the natives until they receive the item, as reported by post on June 19, 2010.²⁵⁰ China. The Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs warned Taiwan internet merchants to be vigilant against the Nigerian frauds after the filling of four different cases of Nigerian frauds in April 2010. To mitigate the effects of the Nigerians scams, Chou stated that the department has recommended to the homeland Security office that, all the popular websites in Taiwan displays a running headline on the page to warn sellers of different online scams.

Criminal activities of these fraudsters have also manifested in Taiwan Visa procurement scam. The new trend adopted by fraudsters to obtain money from unsuspecting members of the public under the pretext of helping them to procure Taiwanese e-visa. The fraudsters allegedly obtain 350 dollars from each applicant for the issuance of the fake – Visa. Many innocent Nigerians have fallen victims to this scam. Sequel to the complaint lodged by Taiwan Trade Office in Lagos against the nefarious activities of the Visa scammers in Jan 13, 2020, the Nigerian Police Fraud Unit in Ikoyi, Lagos, launched an investigation into the Visa fraud matter. The Taiwanese Trade office in Nigeria, in the letter of complaint to the SFU, stated, that it was not issuing electronic tourist Visa to Nigerians and was not charging the sum of 350 United States dollars for its Visa. According to the public relations Officer, Special Fraud Unit, Eyitayo Johnson, the investigation into the Taiwan Visa scam was being carried out by the Diplomatic Unit of the SFU, adding that it was necessary to prevent more unsuspecting members of the public from falling victims of the fraud.

The Dwindling Value of the Naira & Poor Credit Facilities

Nigeria is located in West Africa while Taiwan is located in South



East Asia. The distance from Nigeria to Taiwan is 11,826 kilometer “The straight-line distance is 12,472km (7750 miles or 6,734 nautical miles). The average price of one-way flights from Lagos to Taipei is \$1075 US dollars. The Average price for round trip flights from Lagos to Taipei is \$4602 US dollars”. The exchange rate between the Nigerian currency Naira and the United States dollars is abysmally poor fluctuating between N450-500 to one dollar between 2016 and 2018, depending on market variables.

Based on the above stated indices, transacting business between Nigeria and Taiwan requires huge capital outlay. Long distance occasioned by low exchange rate dwindling fortunes of the Naira in the foreign exchange market have inflicted a tottering blow on gainful economic interactions between Nigeria and Taiwan. The situation is compounded by unwillingness of Banks in Nigeria to lend money to importers and exporters of both raw materials and manufactured products. As noted by Ferdinand Agu, of Nigerian-Taiwan Chamber of Commerce, most Nigerian banks are mostly interested in financing importation of petroleum products into the country because of high demands for these products in the country and the high profits accruing in the transaction.

Importers of petroleum products are given preference by most banks and other financial institutions in Nigeria. Import and export business between Nigeria and Taiwan requires big capital base to succeed. To make good profit from this intercontinental commercial venture, one needs to purchase goods in huge commercial quantity. The cost of shipping the goods to the desired destination is very high, the air fare is high and you are still required to pay the approved custom duties and other levies. It is indeed a capital-intensive venture, with the commercial banks not very willing to give low interest loan to this category of importers and exporters, it becomes very difficult to break even. Agu decried the fact that, even the Nigerian Export and Import Bank (NEXIM) established by the Federal Government in 1991 as an Export credit



Agency charged with the provision of export credit guarantee and export credit insurance facilities to its clients, have not really lived up to expectations. Stringent conditionalities required to obtain NEXIM loan can be frustrating. He argued that genuine loan applicants hardly get loan due to stringent conditionalities requirements by Banks. Agu attributed the imbalance in trade figure in Nigeria- Taiwan trade partly to poor capital base to finance the highly capital-intensive venture. For instance, from available records, bilateral trade between Nigeria and Taiwan totaled 540 million US dollars in 2017. Of this figure, Nigeria export to Taiwan accounted for 441 million dollars while Taiwanese exports to Nigeria accounted for the remaining 98million United States dollars.

The End of Cold War and Insurgency in Nigeria

The end of the cold war between the West and East-blocs in the early 1990s had direct negative impact on not only Taiwan relations with Nigeria, but other African countries in general. With the end of the cold war, Nigeria and other African countries lost the bargaining position that they had to obtain concession from the super powers during the cold war era (Skidmore, 2002). The interest of world powers in the continent declined seriously after the cold war. Economic assistance by the great powers to African Countries to ensure their loyalty which was the practice during the cold war era dried up after the cold war. Assistance to African countries by the powers in form of low interest loan, grants joint collaboration in defence and security which was frequent during the cold war had been scaled down to the lowest minimum. The economic assistance had been the lifeline for development in most African countries. With the waning interest of the super powers in Africa, the Peoples Republic of China readily filled the vacuum. China's economic assistance to Nigeria and most African countries are unquantifiable. With enormous resources at her disposal China had been able to dispense huge economic assistance to African countries in dire need of economic assistance. China's patronage of



Africa accounted for the fact that out of 33 African countries that recognized Taiwan in the early 1960s, the figure had plummeted to only one country. Eswathini, formally Swaziland, a tiny kingdom in South Africa maintained bilateral diplomatic ties with Taiwan. Taiwan has not been able to compete on equal terms with China, due to China's financial strength and political influence.

Though the Peoples Republic of China employed the instrumentality of aid and economic assistance in form of soft interest loan to win over Africa at the expense of Taiwan, Yu and Longenecker opined that;

Many studies focusing on the efficacy of aid have found that no relationship exists between aid and economic success in Africa. It has no impact on job creation or the competitiveness of the recipients country's economy. If the correlation between the volume of aid received and a country's economic development is tenuous at best, then it becomes relevant to examine the primary reasons for a country's disbursement of aid.

The end of the cold war created a vacuum of economic assistance to struggling African countries to count their friendship and support, the Peoples Republic of China with enormous resources at her disposal stepped into the shoes bequeathed by the super powers in the African continent.

Conclusion

This thesis highlighted the growing role of economic interests rather than ideological or political commitments in Nigeria - Taiwan relations. The penetrating academic searchlight beamed on Nigerian-Taiwan ties from 1960-2020, uncovered that, from the beginning of Nigeria's journey as an independent country on 1st October 1960, and commencement of bilateral ties with members



of the international community, the overriding interest of Nigeria in Taiwan had always been economic. While Taiwan, on the other hand, had from the onset of Nigeria's attainment of independence and emergence as a leading country in Africa, desired the establishment of full diplomatic relations with Nigeria, apparently, to bolster her quest for recognition in global diplomatic circles as a sovereign state, Nigeria consistently refused to accede to Taiwan's request; limiting her relations with Taiwan to economic and cultural sector.

The illuminating research light beamed by this research work has uncovered the fact that, no single country, however big and great can provide every solution to a country's developmental needs. In a pluralized world, no country, however great can claim to have monopoly of developmental ideas. Every country has its area of comparative advantage that are essential in the process of development. Diplomacy must be flexible to effectively accommodate a country's interest at all time.



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