

## “A Win-Win Conditionality of Foreign Policy”: A Re-Appraisal of Sino-African Economic Relations Since the Dawn of The 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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### **Abstract**

This study examines “A Win-Win Conditionality of Foreign Policy”: A Re-appraisal of Sino-African Economic Relations Since the Dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The Sino-Africa economic relations have risen much attraction and grown in strength following the emergence of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000. The Win-Win situation became famous in the relationships between China and Africa, with a high level of politico-economic and socio-cultural engagements. The main arguments are either that China is a new imperialist in Africa as advanced by many scholars in the West or that she is a champion of development conscious of promoting mutual benefit for both parties as indicated by some members of African scholars and leaders. Using secondary data analyzed by historical method and with the conceptual explanation and understanding of conditionality of foreign policy, Sino-Africa relations and win-win situation as well as dependency and realist theoretical assumptions, this paper interrogates the Sino-African economic relations based on a Win-Win situation. The paper argues that Sino-African economic relations, operating under obvious disparity and skewed cooperation against Africa cannot be considered as a Win-Win situation. The paper finds that Sino-Africa economic relation is thrilled by what both parties focus to again differently from one another and for their national interest. The study however concludes that Sino-African economic relations diversified Africa’s economy to China with similar patterns and characteristics of the Western capitalist, thus, for the benefit of China.

**Keywords:** Win-Win, Conditionality, Foreign Policy, Sino-Africa, and Economic Relations

### **Introduction**

International political economy (IPC) deals with the relationships between politics and economics (that is, the study of political units and political relationships, and economic and economic relationships) are relevant for the understanding of world economic relations as it regards the Sino-African economic relations. S. O. Ajayi indicates that, “the evolution of the international political economy presently in practice did not grow spontaneously, however, it dates back to the fifteenth century when independent sovereign states in the modern circumstances started to unite”.<sup>1</sup> State as a prime actor in international system discerns its international political economic interest based on set ideas or beliefs on account of how the global political-economic operates and what profits exist towards it.<sup>2</sup> This global political economic relation in which the state is an active player is divided into three subsystems namely; the Western system of interdependence, the North-South system of dependence and the East-West system of independence.<sup>3</sup>

In this study, the ongoing introduction, the historical origin of Sino-African relations, conceptual analysis and understanding of Sino-Africa relations, the theoretical framework of Sino-African economic relations, China’s strategic perceptions and debates of engagement: a reflection, re-appraisal of Sino-African economic relations based on win-win situation in the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, constraints and challenges of Sino-African economic relations: win-win conditionality and conclusion shall be considered.

### **Historical Origin of Sino-African Relations**

The historical relationships between China and Africa began as far back as in the 7<sup>th</sup> century when both had direct contact through the sea routes for trade and cultural exchanges although, separated by a vast ocean.<sup>4</sup> As time proceeded, a remarkable change occurred in the 1950s which signified China's involvement in African affairs, because most of the African states started to emancipate themselves from the unacceptable yoke of colonialism.<sup>5</sup> The Bandung Conference of 1955 provided Beijing the ample opportunity to assert its leadership in the Third-World and Non-alignment movement which marked the first Asia-Africa international relationship, and Egypt became the first African country to establish diplomatic relations with China in May 1956.<sup>6</sup>

China's involvement in Africa was primarily centered on building ideological and political solidarity with underdeveloped Third-World countries to advance the Chinese model of communism for the first time. She supported independence movements in Africa by the provision of weapons and military training as well as moral aid and most African countries had their independence from their erstwhile colonist in the 1960s.<sup>7</sup> But, China's support to Africa was captured under two main purposes: Firstly, to counter the recognition of Taiwan as the representative of China and discourage votes for the eventual rejection of Taiwan's China credentials in the United Nations; and secondly, to counter the West's influence and the Soviet Union's influence on the continent.<sup>8</sup>

During this period, China's economic aids and technical assistance were given to Africa. Various infrastructural projects were carried out one of them was the 1860-kilometer-long Tanzania-Zambia railway, financed and built by China was recorded as a monumental achievement for African development. Furthermore, in the Mid-1950s, China gave about 2.5 Billion Dollars to 36 African countries as aid and sent ten thousand engineers, doctors, and technicians to Africa for technical assistance.<sup>9</sup> Through these aid programmes, China, in turn succeeded in gaining Africa's support which culminated in the People's Republic of China's (PRC) acceptance of the Taiwan-based Republic of China in 1971.<sup>10</sup>

However, the period between 1978 to 1990s saw China embark on economic reforms, as she focused on domestic economic development and opened up to the Western World. China's political interest and economic interest in Africa waned. Because of this, China-Africa relations as observed by Christine Han were described as a "decade of neglect".<sup>11</sup> Fundamentally, by the 1980s, China began the long, steady, and most determined process of modernization. This modernization was originally described as China's socialist modernization. It was later transformed into China's foreign policy of "Opening up and Reform Policy".<sup>12</sup> Applying whatever methods, principles, or programmes available to suit her internal circumstances, the opening of China's door policy attracted the Western World to China.<sup>13</sup>

The opening up and reform policy therefore assigned a new role to the imperialist West, to the extent that American interest to participate in China's modernization efforts laid a blueprint, and relegated Soviet social imperialism to the position of enemy number one. African states fitted into the same paradigm shift in China. To Africans, China at this time seemed to turning her back to them. Nevertheless, the truth was that the labour pains involved in the birth of a new China necessitated accepting assistance from anyone who could and would give it. Africa was not definitely in a position to play such a role in the modernization of China that had become the major preoccupation of the Chinese leaders.<sup>14</sup>

Sino-African relation was further enhanced by the influences presented to it in the 1990s with the end of the Cold War era. Western countries' interest in Africa had started declining and created a lacuna. China, therefore, utilized this lacuna and boosted her interactions with Africa which eventually led to the Beijing Declaration of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). The forum provided an avenue for the Ministers in charge of foreign affairs, foreign trade and international cooperation, and economic or social affairs from China and Africa to meet in Beijing from 10 to 12 October, 2000, and to discuss issues of common interest (first of its kind) in the history of Sino-Africa relations.<sup>15</sup>

### Conceptual Analysis and Understanding of Sino-African Economic Relations

Sino-African economic relations have elicited the need for conceptual discourses which without, an understanding of China and Africa's economic relations may be considered as a mere contemplation. On that note, the conditionality of foreign policy, Sino-Africa relations, and win-win situations would be conceptualized in this paper. Firstly, the conditionality of foreign policy can be understood as a reflective magnet to the foreign policy decision or action. According to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition, Conditionality simply means a state of being subject to conditions.<sup>16</sup> John T. Rourke and Mark A. Boyer defined conditionality as a term that refers to the policy of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and other financial agencies to attach conditions to their loans and grants.<sup>17</sup> Conditionality is a consequential word that conveys some certain basis for what one stands to agree/disagree, adhere/compromise in terms of the quest for object or thing. Conditionality involves action and reaction word or clause that begins with the "if or unless" condition.<sup>18</sup>

Foreign policy, on the other hand, is defined as the aggregate of a game plan, decision, actions position, or postures of a government in its relations with others but geared towards the realization of a national interest in the global world.<sup>19</sup> S. O. Ayah sees foreign policy as a plan or action by the government of a state regarding its relations with other sovereign states, and non-state actors.<sup>20</sup> Discussing foreign policy, Palmer and Perkins agree that foreign, policy is based upon a general conception of national requirement...<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, Ibrahim Gaya Mabe perceives foreign policy as a coordinated strategy with which institutionally designated decision-makers in a country seek to manipulate the international environment to achieve certain national objectives.<sup>22</sup> It, therefore, means that the tool by which a state influences the action or inaction of other states to attain its perceived national interest is foreign policy.

Consequently, the conditionality of foreign policy as conceptualized in this paper regarding Sino-African economic relations suggests 'conditionally dependence'. A situation whereby the foreign policy of China to Africa stands for what Africa gives before she benefits from China, which has created a yawning gap conducive to China's interest. It seeks to promote and protect China's superior national interest for Africa's dependency through the conditional offer of economic aid, infrastructural developments, etc. but with a hidden agenda targeted at the natural resource extraction from Africa and support for Chinese industrial outfit.

The English prefix 'Sino' means 'Chinese' or of China. The prefix 'Sino' comes from the Latin word 'Sinae' which is the Latin name for China. It generally refers to China; the Chinese people; the culture of China and the history of China.<sup>23</sup> Still, Sino-Africa relations according to Zeng Qiang is embedded in the long history of interchange, sharing of similar historical experience where China and Africa have all along sympathized with each other and supported one another in the struggle for national liberation and independence.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, the Sino-Africa relation as conceptually applied in this study denotes China's solidarity with Africa throughout the independence struggle; and its contribution to the continent via foreign direct investment, infrastructural development, trade, and bilateral aid which most of its current engagements with Africa have undoubtedly raised the question of neo-colonialism equal to those experienced in the North-South relations. Sino-Africa economic relations by its very traits and patterns can also be conceptualized in this paper mainly as: China's quest and hunger for rich Africa's natural resources; the need for an international market for Chinese manufactured goods; and more importantly, the discovering of business opportunities for Chinese multinational companies in Africa.

The term win-win situation which is also known as the "Harvard Concept or Double Win Strategy" is traceable to a research project conducted at Harvard University in the 1970s.<sup>25</sup> The concept focuses on proper negotiation in which the parties involved in a negotiation situation enhance a profit by reaching an agreement with each other.<sup>26</sup> However, the understanding and meaning of a win-win situation is better expatiated than defined, hence, it connotes that:

*parties involved can adopt the perception of the other party; not only have the individual advantage but also a real advantage of the other party in*

*mind; know that it is not about winning and losing, but, about winning and winning; believe that it is not about the position of the strongest and also not about maximizing profits, but, about the advantages of cooperation that both sides want to realize; and simply understand that they are mutually responsible for the interest of the other party.*<sup>27</sup>

Drawing from the above premises, Phinea Bbaala asserts that win-win relationships are only possible where there is equality and the absence of exploitation and domination motives.<sup>28</sup>

Regarding this paper therefore, the conceptualization of a win-win situation means the resources-based relations Africa has had with China over the last decades that promote the exportation of raw materials to China and importation of finished products with little or no technological transfer to Africa. It is the indiscriminate adoption of the Chinese development model which cannot by any way be considered a win-win situation instead, African continent-China-dependence for aid, infrastructure, value-subtraction, etc.

### **Theoretical Framework of Sino-Africa Economic Relations**

Many theoretical analyses pervade across the study of international relations and Sino-African economic relations. Theories such as dependency theory, world system theory, interdependency theory, modernization theory, liberalism, etc. Dependency theory is an economic system that seeks to explain why economically industrialized countries become wealthy and less economically industrialized countries become poor.<sup>29</sup> Nkemjika E. Kalu, quoting Dos Santos describes dependency as ... condition which shapes a certain structure of the world economy such that it favours some countries to the detriment of others and limits the development possibilities of the subordinate economics ..., a situation in which the economy of a certain group of countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which they are subjected to service.<sup>30</sup>

Daniel A. Offiong argues that dependence theory has conditioned contemporary underdevelopment in Africa ... hence, Africa became oriented to the export of primary products, under the control of metropolitan capital and constituted as markets for imported manufactures from the same metropolitan countries.<sup>31</sup>

The central argument of the dependency theory is that external conditions and exploitation of the less economically industrialized countries by the economically industrialized countries are responsible for the underdevelopment and persistent dependence of the former on the latter.<sup>32</sup> Supporters of dependency theory are Raul Prebisch, Henrique Cardoso, Hans Singer, Andre Gunder Frank, Walter Rodney, Theotino Dos Santos, Daniel A. Offiong, and others. To apply dependency theoretical perspectives in this paper, China will be considered as having the features of an economically/advanced industrialized (core) country while Africa the Third-World South (Periphery) is the less economically industrialized country.

Therefore, dependence exists when the ... colonized areas (African states/periphery) became independent, and the core (China) continued to exploit the periphery (Africa) through neo-imperialism, not just by the outright occupation of the area but indirect domination via military interventions, control of international organizations, biased trading practices, and collusion with corrupt elites who govern the periphery.<sup>33</sup>

The exploitation of Africa by China is exercised through indirect control and this is driven by China's needs for "cheap primary resources, external markets, profitable investment opportunities, and low-wage labour."<sup>34</sup> Africa produces low-cost, low-profit, primary products such as agricultural products and raw materials that subsisted China's production of high-priced and high-profit manufactured goods which majority of which are eventually sold to Africa.<sup>35</sup>

Following dependency theorists' position in this paper, it is interesting to apply an alternative theoretical paradigm through which to understand and evaluate Sino-African economic relations, further, with the assertion that Sino-African economic relations were not purely 'historical dependency'. Although, Daniel A. Offiong argues that, "historical situations of dependency have conditioned contemporary underdevelopment in Africa and other underdeveloped societies".<sup>36</sup> Thus, realist theory is aptly adopted in this study.

Realist theory is commonly referring to sovereign states in their association with one another. Its origin dates back to the ancient traditional thoughts of such political philosophers as Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Hans J. Morgenthau, E. H. Carr, and others.<sup>37</sup> Juliet Kaarbo and James Lee Ray assert that realism which is also known as *realpolitik* sees states as the most important actor in international politics. States are governments that exercise supreme and sovereign authority over a defined territory.<sup>38</sup> Realists believe that the struggle between states to secure their frequently conflicting national interests are the main issue in the international system. Realists also believe that power determines which country prevails. They therefore, held that politics is aimed at increasing power, keeping power and demonstrating power in global politics.<sup>39</sup>

Inferably, state-centric realism identified that states are the principal actors in an international system driven by national interest... which suggests that "interests and policies of states are determined by the governing political elites, the pressures of the powerful groups within a national society, and the nature of the national system of political economy."<sup>40</sup>

In this study, Africa's engagement with China is adjudged to have come from the African state's national interest to benefit from China's aid. Affirming the above point Nkemjika E. Kalu posits that Sino-African economic relations can be viewed as the African state's self-interest motives exercised in the pursuit of political and economic objectives as much as China's interest which is a very pragmatic realist pursuit of national interest.<sup>41</sup> Africa's choice to engage and participate in trade, infrastructure, technology etc. with China cannot be motivated by any other thing but by national interest. The underdeveloped countries of Africa offered cheap labour and raw material to China in exchange for China's technology and infrastructural development supports encapsulating the idea of national interest. Thus, the Sino-African economic relations which revolve around both sides' national interest captures realist theory.

### **China's Strategic Perceptions and Debates of Engagement in Africa: A Reflection**

Originally, Chinese interests in Africa centered on building ideological solidarity with other underdeveloped nations to the Chinese style of communism, and with an attempt to repel Western imperialism. By that time, China had not arrived economically and was insignificant as her diplomats were relatively unskilled. But China saw the African environment as lucrative, and good for investment, and kept contact with the African continent when the Big Powers were leaving Africa during and after the end of the Cold War. In most international forums, she did little, instead defending her core interest such as the "one China principle". Irrespective of this weakness, China's greatest achievement in this period was that she kept up her contacts based on strategic importance when the Cold War powers were pulling out of Africa and reducing their developmental aid.<sup>42</sup>

At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, China's demonstration of a more proactive approach in her economic foreign policy with Africa was confirmed by strong economic growth, a more sophisticated generation of Chinese leaders, better scholarships in China on African affairs, and her advent as a global actor. The first China-Africa forum held in Beijing, in 2000, marked China's renewed interest in Africa. It became abundantly clear at the forum that behind the seemingly harmless long hand of friendship she extended towards Africa, nonetheless, harboured great mixed interest. China's mixed (selfish) interests manifested in her growing industries' demand for new energy and raw material suppliers, her exporter's need for market, her diplomat's support in international organizations and her propaganda support from allies to advance Chinese interest, and when necessary, to counter the United States of America's status in the world.<sup>43</sup>

China also sees Africa as a good area for investment because it is not too expensive. The Chinese are aware that the competition for Africa has strategic implications for which ever country that fails to establish access to its market. Thus, Chinese aggressively pursuing economic opportunities on the African continent and also looking for support to become a global super power.<sup>44</sup> J. Kurlantzick asserts that cultivating Africa allies offers China crucial support at international forum like the United Nations where China is beginning to have more active presence. It is for the Chinese that if they could play a major role in Africa, they could stake a claim as a great power in the world. Undoubtedly, Beijing presence in Africa reflect her efforts in creating a paradigm of globalization that favours China.<sup>45</sup>

Assuredly, Africa is definitely part of this China's global strategic concern because Africa has the single but largest bloc of vote in the UN and the World Trade Organization. However, China seems to differ with proponents of this line of argument aforesaid, she described her dealing with Africa as win-win situation. Chinese leader's emphasis every time is that China always stands to the principle of mutual benefit.<sup>46</sup>

Contrary to China's postulations of Africa on the bases of win-win situation, Kwameh Nkrumah, the first President of Independent Ghana in his wisdom argues that:

*Method of neo-colonialists are subtle and varied and went further to assert that they devise a plethora of ways to accomplish objective formerly achieved by naked colonialism. He strongly maintains the position that modern imperialist powers perpetrate colonialism while at the same time preaching about freedom, non-interference in affairs of other countries and support for sovereignty of nation states. Chinese imperialist strategy includes all these and are even subtler. Thus, China's win-win formula might be China's attempt to achieve the same in Africa,<sup>47</sup>*

Therefore, China performs as the core while Africa acts as the periphery. Africa is an important component of the Chinese controlled China-Africa-West trade triangle. In this argument, China sits at the apex and draws very cheap raw material from Africa and sells manufactured goods at a super profit to the West which is her greater and richer market while at the same time trying to weaken the link between Africa and West.

Closely related debates to Sino-Africa economic relations is in the aspect of the sincerity of China's aids to African countries. African leaders are so excited about China's generosity and have opened their arms to receive Chinese aid. In African circle, these aids are believed to be better than Western aids because the latter aids are associated with harsh conditionalities. China makes official pronouncement and press statements which made African leaders believe that its loan is "disinterested aids", and no sting was attached to it.<sup>48</sup> In other hand, some African leaders worried/bemoaned on the Chinese foreign aids to them, arguing that it is a method by which China tries to maintain position of influence and control over Africa, thus sustaining and preventing them from falling into the sphere of influence to her (China) Western rivalry.<sup>49</sup> China makes sure that through aid she kept would cause African countries from falling into US and Taiwanese hands.

However, what made it easy for China's breakthrough in Africa was the fact that the majority of the African leaders perceive China as a potential large and growing market for Africa's natural resources which offers an alternative to the traditional dependence on the West. Acknowledging China's financial, infrastructural, technical and humanitarian aids were in it is nowhere compared to that from the West, African countries therefore find China's cooperation more acceptable because it gives them opportunities to negotiate terms. China's pledge to support African countries at the United Nations especially, South Africa and Nigeria's aspirations for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council contributed to the successes of the Chinese engagements in Africa.<sup>50</sup>

### **Re-appraisal of Sino-African Economic Relations Based on Win-Win Condition in the Dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

The Sino-African economic relations since the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, undoubtedly, reflected on China's new African policy and strategy. Since FOCAC conference took place in 2000, the conference has been going on every three years. It held in 2003, 2006 and 2009 to be mentioned but few. The Second FOCAC which was convened in 2003, in Ethiopia and the Third in 2006, hosted by Beijing during President Hu Jintao government outlined the basis of China's African policy document amidst 43 African heads of state who gathered at the summit.<sup>51</sup>

It is therefore the culmination in the Beijing's declaration and programmes for China-African cooperation in economic and social development as pointed above that the foundation of the strategic 'win-win' partnership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century emerged. However, the question one may ask is, to what extent is Sino-African economic relations win-win situation to both sides?

Sino-African economic relations under the win-win conditionality of foreign policy quest and target revolves on the China's diversification of investment beyond strategic resources to manufacturing, infrastructure, entrepreneurial development, cultural ties, peacekeeping and the principle of non-interference in Africa.<sup>52</sup>

Arising from the above points, it has been largely acknowledged that China's economic landscape has brought some positive economic prosperity and opportunities to African continent. Firstly, China's growing appetite for natural resources has driven up commodity prices benefiting resource-rich African countries. Secondly, cheaper consumer goods and capital goods have enable Africans to enjoy a higher purchasing power which significantly improved terms of trade. Thirdly, the Chinese are reconstructing stadiums, bridges, hospitals, schools and roads in Africa. They are also active in telecommunication, building basic infrastructure for energy supply, water supply, health care facilities and poverty alleviation scheme.<sup>53</sup>

Scholars like Victor Ojatorotu and Ayo Whetho observed in their research that: In 2006, China provided more than 8 billion USD in loans to Sub-Sahara Africa for infrastructural development. In 2007, China pledged to provide up to 20 billion USD for trade and infrastructure over the next few years and, also created China-Africa Development Fund. The China-Africa Development Fund earmarked 700 million USD for over 30 projects in various areas including; agricultural machinery manufacturing, power, construction materials, industrial parks and mining.<sup>54</sup> The six trade and economic cooperation zones in Zambia, Mauritius, Nigeria, Egypt and Ethiopia are developing well with an investment of 190 million USD in infrastructure and companies operating in these zones have accumulatively invested 920 million USD in effect to make Africa to upgrade industrially, and technology wise as well as to boost employment, increase in foreign exchange earnings, improve lives and thereby achieve socio-economic development based on win-win situation.<sup>55</sup>

In Kenya, Chinese traders have set up shops in Gikomba, Kamukunji and Nyamakima markets which are major entry points for cheap imports of electrical, kitchen ware and second-hand clothes in the country. An official association of Chinese enterprises in Kenya over Kenya-China Economic and Trade Association (KCETA) shows that there are more than 400 Chinese business enterprises in the country, and the enterprises have provided more than 100,000 employments where people out of the local populations have benefited in Kenya.<sup>56</sup>

In Nigeria, there are major Chinese enterprises operating in different areas. These include the following:

*SINOPEC in the oil and gas sector and employing some 400,000 with assets worth 155 billion USD dollars; CNPC, also in oil and gas and employing 1.8 million with 80,000 of them expatriates and assets value at some 500 billion US dollars;*

*SEPCO is involved in electric power plant construction and employing 20,000 with estimated assets value of 39 billion US dollars; CSCEC is in*

*the construction and real estate business and employing 122,000 with offshore oil and gas and employing 21,000 with assets value of 14 billion US dollars; Huawei in tele-communications and employing 51, 000 with an assets value of 25 billion US dollars; ZTE is also in telecoms and employing 86,000 with an estimated assets value of 13 billion US dollars; Sinoma, involved in cement engineering construction in collaboration with Dangote Group of companies and employing 10,000 with assets value of 2.9 billion US dollars.<sup>57</sup>*

By estimation, 97 percent of Chinese exports to Nigeria were value-added products involving employment for the Chinese within their economy. It is clear that Chinese companies based in Nigeria take more than the lion's share in these economic and business transactions.<sup>58</sup>

Sino-Africa economic relations provided a potential market for African goods and services, albeit mostly, from extractive industries with links to oil and mineral trade. By 2009, Chinese involved on double assistance to Africa. This development assistance covered the cost of much development projects and debt cancellation. Chinese infrastructural projects such as rails, roads, bridges and dams' construction are made manifest at a time when Western World had become largely disinterested in projects of such nature in Africa.<sup>59</sup>

Furthermore, recipient countries are expected to give preferential treatment to Chinese businesses. For example, Beijing offered a US \$ 2 billion loan to Angola with the provision that the latter would reserve two percent of contracts for Chinese firms. China has also cancelled Liberia's US \$ 10 million debt and waved duties on Liberia's export as Beijing seeks to gain access to Liberia's iron ore deposits. China has also offered Cameroon US \$ 100 million in grants and loans. China is actively present in national security assistance programmes; selling arms mostly to Sudan, Nigeria and Zimbabwe to enhance the capacity of these countries to maintain internal security in order to achieve a smooth economic activity in those countries.<sup>60</sup>

Sino-African economic relations have in many ways fast-tracked China's development relations with Africa, which has been viewed by many scholars as an important litmus test for Chinese foreign policy at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Indubitably, Africa has been influenced by this partnership, especially in the areas of economic security, supply security, finance-credit and techno-industrial capability security as well as "One Belt One Road", and "21<sup>st</sup> century Maritime Silk Road" also known as Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI initiative means Chinese engagement in the construction of interconnecting infrastructural projects in different parts of the world following ancient Chinese international trade routes.<sup>61</sup> Thus, African countries along the BRI route have benefited from these Chinese financial infrastructural projects of roads, pipelines, railways and seaports.

### **Constraints and Challenges of Sino-African Economic Relations: Win-Win Conditionality**

Sino-African economic relations have faced a plethora of constraints and challenges. One of the hurdles is the fact that China's economic relations with Africa have been accused of neo-colonialist pattern, with such implications that were experienced the aftermath of the industrial revolution in British and other European powers. Demonstrably, B. Barkindo and others indicate that:

*British during her industrial revolution beginning in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries with a large number of adventurous merchants started a mission to ensure that British manufactured goods were exported to all parts of the world. But, the British needed the necessary raw materials to maintain and service her industrialized companies and markets for manufactured goods. By then, European powers had industrialized and developed goods like cotton cloth, soap and metal utensils etc. Mass production was made possible by mechanized equipment, and goods produced were cheaper than the African hand-woven cloth and other essential consumable goods.*



*The need for raw materials and market for manufactured goods eventually attracted the Europeans to Africa.*<sup>62</sup>

Thus, China's patterns of operation in Africa cannot be diverged from the similar drive pointed out above. Scholars and policy analysts such as Christine Han have argued that Chinese engagement in Africa as regards to economic gains and losses, governance, environment, human rights, etc. operates against FOCAC and win-win situation. This is because charges of low quality and discrimination have been leveled against China's commercial concerns in Africa as an unreasonable preference for Chinese labour and materials. Sino-African economic relations have been mired by poor employment practices, bribery and corruption, lack of transparency, poor workmanship and the dumping of poor quality products and fakes materials, lack of respect for the environment, unfair competition enabled by excessive state support and finally, the problem of trade imbalance.<sup>63</sup>

China's footprints on the African continent and the increasing roles they play have been observed by Tull M. Denis as:

*New-colonialism underpinned by corrupt business culture, which helps breed local elites who establish control over key resource sectors to manipulate the economy for their aggrandizement, thereby contravening the win-win situation propagated by China. To date, however, nothing indicates that Africa will be able to compete successfully with China, because, its exports to China are by and large limited to capital intensive commodities. This imbalance has the effect of Africa creating jobs in China while imports from China have undermined job market in Africa.*<sup>64</sup>

In some of the African countries where the Chinese are doing business attracts many complaints. The local people in Botswana pointed out to the problems with large building contracts awarded to Chinese construction companies and others. Some of the projects have already been abandoned or staked, with the contractors running behind schedule. Botswana is not alone with this complaint, several other countries in Africa such as Zambia, Senegal, Namibia, Malawi, Nigeria and Tanzania have reported problems of shoddy construction and lack of respect for labour and other local laws. China's Prime Minister, Li Keqiang who visited Angola and Kenya in May, 2014 acknowledged the fact but quickly asserted that none of the African countries have reported issues that can potentially lead to a severance of diplomatic ties with Beijing.<sup>65</sup>

In Zambia, for example, a typical case of anti-Chinese engagement took place, which was rooted in the role Chinese company played on the copper industry. China had become a major player in Zambia's political economy that saw some number of copper plants privatized and managed by Chinese entrepreneurs. The new Chinese copper mine owners failed to adhere to requisite best labour practices and safety measures on a number of occasions. Thus, violent conflicts erupted in the copper industry as works protested on poor salary payment and working conditions.<sup>66</sup>

In Nigeria, Chinese entrepreneurs have faced resentment for competing with local businesses in the same line of business. Local associations of small scales traders challenged the role of Chinese businesses at a China Town mall in Lagos as well as in Kano State. The traders voiced out their concerns on infiltration of Chinese traders as threat to their own businesses. The same case applied in Ghana, where local business association led protest against an increased presence of Chinese traders in wholesale and retail business sector.<sup>67</sup>

Also, it has been pointed out that China and Kenya have experienced increased level of trade and investment, although, lopsided against Kenya. Notably, China's construction of Thika Super highway and standard Gauge Railway from Mombasa to Nairobi are infrastructural project worthy of reckoning. However, taking the estimation of the both party's transactions, Kenya exported to China an average of Ksh 10 million while China's import to Kenya amounted to Ksh 390 billion which demonstrated a big gap trade relation on the favour of China.<sup>68</sup>

Sino-African economic relations have been accused of growing concerns of asymmetry trade relations with African as consumers of Chinese value-added goods and Africa as an exporter of raw materials with adverse effect on Africa and African producers. In several African countries Labour Unionist and domestic manufacturers are concerned about the influx of cheap Chinese products which threaten the operations and survival of local companies.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, China's stepped-up leaning to African countries has been proved risk saddling than with conditional debt, just as African states are trying to ease their debt burden through the Highly-Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative and other strategies.<sup>70</sup>

In addition, little or nothing is being done in the area of technology transfer to African states, mainly for the development of Africa's domestic products and management of her raw materials devoid of any external assistance. There has been also less or no much progress in local job creation as Chinese projects, typically, are done by Chinese workers whose environment and labour standard, potentially, have had negative implication under the context of win-win situation.<sup>71</sup>

### Conclusion

Sino-African economic relations since the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century on the basis of a win-win situation demonstrated geo-strategic economic interests rather than the desire to export a specific political philosophy. The current drive of Sino-Africa economic relations is located on the increasing economic needs as well as the hunger for natural resources in which China's relations with Africa are intensified. Although, the Sino-Africa economic relations categorically depicted dependency theory with realist theory aptly applied. It shows a conscious effort of national interest characteristics. It is clear that Sino-African economic relations endeared Africa to much socio-economic development, ranging from infrastructure, trade, and other investment engagements. Nevertheless, the mutual benefit assumed the Sino-African economic relations is flawed by the juxtaposition of technological advancement, human capital, and market production in terms of direct investments between both parties.

Therefore, a strategic economic relationship between a China which is still run by the regimented Communist Party and Africa whose domestic environment is the opposite especially in terms of infrastructural development cannot be anywhere but obviously based on a win-win situation instead win-win-conditionality. Sino-African economic relations cannot also be argued to achieve sustainable development in Africa's economic system. However, it proves to assist in the diversification of the African economy, best considering to the service delivery profit for China and its foreign policy.

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