

## **China's Engagement with Nigeria: Opportunity or Opportunist?\***

by **Emeka Umejei\*\***

*Department of Journalism, University of the Witwatersrand  
Johannesburg, South Africa*

### **Abstract**

This article answers the question: Does China's engagement with Nigeria represent an opportunity or is it an opportunist? The article employs frame analysis of 31 articles collected from *Thisday* and *Punch* newspapers and questionnaires set up with Everything Journalism group on LinkedIn, to answer the question whether China's is an opportunity or an opportunist in Nigeria.

The article identifies two dominant frames that underpin the framing of China's engagement with Nigeria by the two newspapers; opportunity and opportunist. While opportunity frame is dominant in the newspapers' article, respondents to the questionnaire suggest that China is not different from other emerging global powers, whose national interest is paramount in their engagements with Africa nay Nigeria.

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*\*\* Emeka Umejei is a Doctoral Student on the China-Africa Reporting Project in the Department of Journalism at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.*

Consequently, the article argues that in its engagement with Nigeria, China is both an opportunity and an opportunist. Therefore, the article concludes that while China's engagement with Nigeria would provide opportunities, it is the responsibility of the Nigerian authorities to ensure that what China offers, is in tandem with its national aspirations.

## **Introduction**

This article is divided into three broad sections including background, methodology and conclusion. The background provides an overview on China-Nigeria relations, trade, challenges; methodology includes theoretical approaches and results of analysis and conclusion, which, sums up the findings of the article.

## **Background to China-Nigeria relations**

Nigeria and China commenced diplomatic relations in 1971 and by 1972, a six-man delegation led by Nigeria's top government representative visited Beijing, where both countries signed an open-ended agreement on economic and technical co-operation and trade (Ogunsanwo, 2008: 192). In the aftermath of the open-ended agreement, other high profile Nigerian delegations visited China, culminating in the visit by General Yakubu Gowon, head of military government at the time, in 1974 (Ogunsanwo, 2008: 193).

Nigeria and China have enjoyed buoyant relations since the commencement of bi-lateral relations in 1971(Ogunsanwo, 2008: 192). Since the advent of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, every democratically-elected president has visited China except for the current President Muhammadu Buhari, who was recently elected to office. In contrast, however, only one Chinese head of state, Hu Jintao, has visited Nigeria, though twice: 2004 and 2006 (Umejei, 2014). The friendly relations between both countries were reaffirmed at the 70<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the United Nations in New York, where leaders of both countries pledged to sustain bi-lateral relations and strategic partnership (Fmprc, 2015).

## China-Nigeria trade

China frames its engagement with Africa on mutual benefits, shared values and win-win co-operation (Alden, 2007; Brautigam, 2009; Taylor, 2012; Kurlantzick, 2007). Consequently, China has invested heavily in Africa; China is Africa's largest trading partner surpassing traditional partners, Europe and the United States of America (USA). Two-way trade between Africa as a whole and China has grown from US\$ 10.6 billion in 2011 to more than US\$ 200 billion in 2012 (Taylor, 2012; Moyo, 2014) and is forecast to reach US\$ 300 billion by the end of 2015 (ChinaDaily, 2015). The trend is also the same for China-Nigeria trade, which has seen growth from US\$17.7 billion in 2010 (Egbula and Zheng, 2011: 6) to US\$ 23.5 billion by first quarter of 2015 (Okafor, 2015). Similarly, levels of Chinese Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) in Nigeria are the second-highest in Africa after South Africa (Egbula and Zheng, 2011: 6) and by 2010 Nigeria was China's fourth biggest African trading partner and second largest Chinese export destination in Africa (Egbula and Zheng, 2011: 6).

However, the structure of trade between the two countries is marked by differences in exports; China exports a diversified range of manufactured goods such as machinery, textiles (see figure 2) and equipment to Nigeria, while Nigeria's exports to China are oil and gas products (see table 2). In 2014, petroleum products and natural resources comprised 57 per cent of Nigeria's (see figure 3) export to China while China's export to Nigeria comprises majorly of textile materials and machineries. Similarly, China's textile export to Nigeria jumped by 222 per cent from 2010 to 2014 (see table 2).

The export of cheap Chinese textiles to Nigeria has also adversely affected local textile manufacturers in Nigeria (Eneji *et al*, 2012: 133), a position recognised by Sanusi Lamido, Nigeria's former Central Bank Governor (CBN), who argued that Nigeria, with a population of 160 million, spends vast resources importing Chinese consumer goods which would benefit the local economy if they were produced locally (Sanusi, 2013).

In the 1980s, Nigeria had about 175 textile plants with a total of 250,000 employees,

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but the import of cheap Chinese textiles left only 26 of them in operation as of October 2007, employing only 24 000 people (Obiorah, Kew & Tanko, 2008:280). The collapse of textile manufacturing sector in Nigeria has resulted in closure of many textile companies, accompanied with rising unemployment in the country (see Figure 4). Consequently, Kola Jamodu, former president of the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) emphasised that the incursion of the Chinese nationals into small and medium enterprises such as retail trading, textiles and electronics is problematic and urged the federal government to call the Chinese to order (Umejei, 2014: 26).

On the other hand, the trade deficit in China-Nigeria trade(see Figure 1) has been a recurring pattern since Nigeria signed an open-ended economic and technical co-operation with China in 1972 (Ogunsanwo, 2008: 194). Consequently, Nigeria's trade deficit with China has continued to rise on a disproportionate scale reaching more than 180 per cent from 2012 to 2014 (see table 1). Despite trade imbalance between China and Nigeria, cheap Chinese products continue to meet the needs of many average Nigerian homes that are unable to afford quality products (Obiorah, 2006). Consequently, China is an opportunist when the importation of cheap Chinese textiles and machineries result in the collapse of local companies in Nigeria but it provides for opportunities to the satisfaction of consumer needs in Nigeria.

### **Challenges in China-Nigeria relations**

China-Nigeria relations have recorded some sore points since the commencement of bi-lateral relations in 1971. The first disagreement was recorded in 1979 when Nigeria opposed China's support for the Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) rebels in Angola, which was against Nigeria's support for the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) (Ogunsanwo 2008: 195). However, this was a political disagreement which did not alter trade relations between the countries (Ogunsanwo, 2008).

In 2006, Nigeria and China signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the establishment of a strategic partnership, making Nigeria the first African country to sign such a pact with China (Taylor, 2007: 631). The partnership formed part of the

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) drive implemented during the former president Olusegun Obasanjo's administration to encourage Chinese investors to do business in Nigeria. A key outcome of the buoyant relations was the oil-for-infrastructure deal, in which Chinese companies were offered right-of-first refusal for oil processing licenses (Mthembu-Slater 2009; Taylor, 2007; Obiorah, 2006). The China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) was allocated an Oil Processing License in return for investing US\$ 2 billion to rehabilitate the northern Nigerian city of Kaduna's failing oil refinery (Mthembu-Salter, 2009: 2). The deal was, however, terminated when President Umaru Yar'Adua was elected to the presidency of Nigeria in 2007, an action which left a scar in China's engagement with Nigeria (Mthembu-Salter, 2009:9).

Similarly, in 2007, the Great Wall Industry Corporation (GWIC), a Chinese company, launched Nigeria's communication satellite, NigComsat, at the Xichang Satellite Launch Centre, with a lifespan of 15 years (Umejei, 2009). According to the terms of agreement entered into between Nigeria and GWIC, NigComsat was to be technically maintained by GWIC until May 13, 2009, when it would be officially handed over to the Nigerian government, but it failed in orbit in November 2008 after running out of power (Ogunsanwo, 2008: 201). These incidents have left cautious optimism in the engagements between both countries.

### **Chinese companies in Nigeria**

According to the Nigerian Investment Promotion Council (NIPC) registration document, there are 208 registered Chinese companies doing business in Nigeria as of 2013 (Umejei, 2014:23). The major Chinese companies in Nigeria are mostly state-owned enterprises. Some of these are Sinopec (oil and gas), CNPC (oil and gas), SEPCO (electricity power construction), CCECC (construction and real estate), CSCEC (construction and real estate), CNOON (offshore oil and gas), Sinoma (cement engineering construction), CGC (construction), Huawei (telecoms) and Zhong Xing Telecommunication (ZTE) (telecoms). In the Nigerian telecoms sector, ZTE and Huawei dominate (Egbula & Zheng, 2011:12).

**Table 1: Nigeria's trade with China (\$000)**

<b>Export</b>	<b>Import</b>	<b>Trade deficit</b>	<b>YEAR</b>
55456.98	240433.139	-184976.159	1995
6485.567	191221.359	-184735.792	1996
8720.796	573785.298	-565064.502	1997
22960.01	453769.917	-430809.907	1998
171996.1	467635.708	-295639.608	1999
199986.7	499415.032	-299428.332	2000
170357.9	887122.704	-716764.804	2001
108555.4	648133.825	-539578.425	2002
87169.93	1168541.512	-081371.582	2003
429142.4	1015787	-586644.6	2004
438317.3	1983346.853	-545029.553	2005
248072	3448443.253	-200371.253	2006
531741.8	4322923.301	-791181.501	2007
435150.4	7712364.024	-277213.624	2008
834724.5	5416484.06	-4581759.56	2009
1080426	7332308.418	-251882.418	2010
1706576	9358843.444	-652267.444	2011
1674434	10980688.38	-306254.384	2012
1537958	13741606.27	-2203648.27	2013
2345535	18361174.51	-6015639.51	2014

*Source UNCTAD database*

**Table2: Nigeria's unemployment statistics**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Unemployment National estimates</b>	<b>Unemployment (modelled ILO estimate)</b>	<b>Youth unemployment (modelled ILO estimate)</b>
<b>2000</b>		7.6	13.6
<b>2001</b>		7.6	13.8
<b>2004</b>		7.7	13.8
<b>2005</b>		7.6	13.6
<b>2006</b>	12.3	7.6	13.6
<b>2007</b>	12.6	7.6	13.8
<b>2008</b>	14.8	7.6	13.6
<b>2009</b>	19.7	7.6	13.8
<b>2010</b>	21.3	7.6	13.8
<b>2011</b>	23.9	7.6	13.8
<b>2012</b>	-	7.5	13.7
<b>2013</b>	-	7.5	13.6

*Source: World Development Indicators, World Bank*

**Table 3: Nigeria's import from China**

YEAR	TOTAL (All products)	Agricultural machineries (excluding tractors and parts)	Textile and leather machinery	Electrical power machinery and parts	Electrical machinery and apparatus
1995	240433.139	64.052	4533.093	629.413	18184.091
1996	191221.359	27.229	7395.576	970.922	18087.387
1997	573785.298	1519.992	12692.046	1475.064	25813.275
1998	453769.917	1067.097	19755.437	3438.744	17061.956
1999	467635.708	303.41	12299.824	6353.428	18556.334
2000	499415.032	386.273	17368.761	7133.428	11783.354
2001	887122.704	259.063	23901.264	10082.425	18761.664
2002	648133.825	1554.239	9173.992	6504.985	12689.716
2003	1168541.512	1392.45	12994.211	12529.792	30394.093
2004	1015787	1426	13981	8114	10033
2005	1983346.853	3081.859	27545.826	17390.485	34237.164
2006	3448443.253	6818.159	18990.198	38400.36	41422.375
2007	4322923.301	10475.335	29545.405	78406.357	58869.198
2008	7712364.024	7399.332	45493.04	113319.417	185884.544
2009	5416484.06	5880.252	21002.333	80626.49	134147.235
2010	7332308.418	19217.663	29556.852	449964.526	178535.948
2011	9358843.444	21460.765	38068.417	475198.516	232611.937
2012	10980688.38	25394.262	52157.102	199029.315	245622.576
2013	13741606.27	32973.68	70818.28	195924.709	307501.778
2014	18361174.51	40772.446	95412.588	472658.123	407722.638

Source: UNCTAD database



**Table 4: per cent petroleum products of Nigeria's export to China**

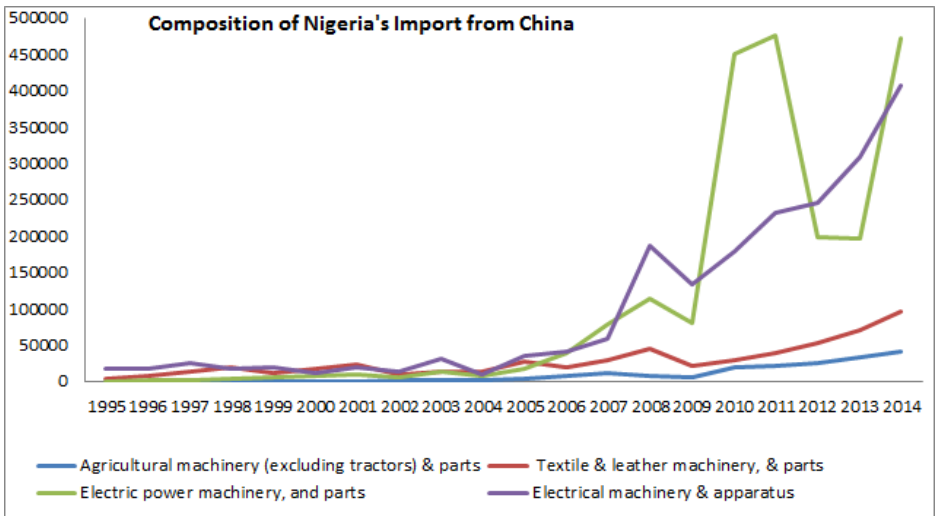
<b>Year</b>	<b>Petroleum/solid minerals</b>	<b>per cent of total export</b>
<b>1995</b>	52598.9	94.8
<b>1996</b>	0.0	0.0
<b>1997</b>	0.0	0.0
<b>1998</b>	15465.5	67.4
<b>1999</b>	150026.7	87.2
<b>2000</b>	172379.7	86.2
<b>2001</b>	119082.9	69.9
<b>2002</b>	76193.3	70.2
<b>2003</b>	43654.6	50.1
<b>2004</b>	362233.6	84.4
<b>2005</b>	358104.7	81.7
<b>2006</b>	221426.6	89.3
<b>2007</b>	447364.1	84.1
<b>2008</b>	212321.6	48.8
<b>2009</b>	651514.9	78.1
<b>2010</b>	717027.8	66.4
<b>2011</b>	777025.5	45.5
<b>2012</b>	1086893.1	64.9
<b>2013</b>	953258.3	62.0
<b>2014</b>	1347122.0	57.4

*Source: UNCTAD database*

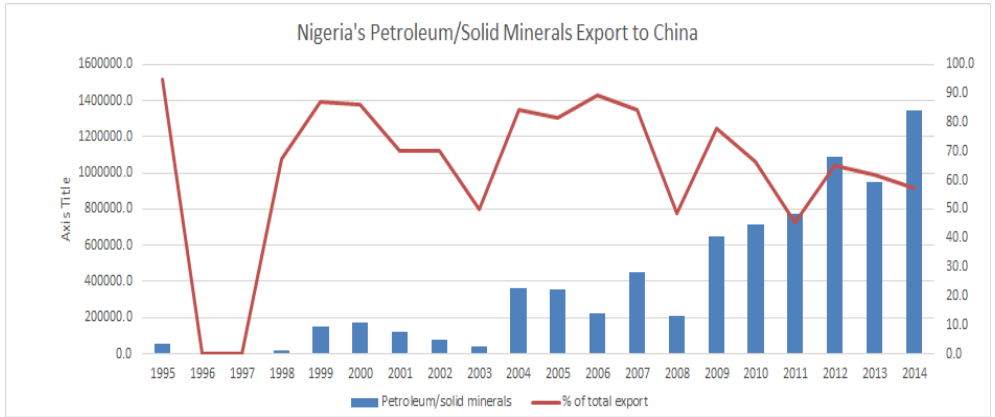
**Figure 1: China-Nigeria trade**



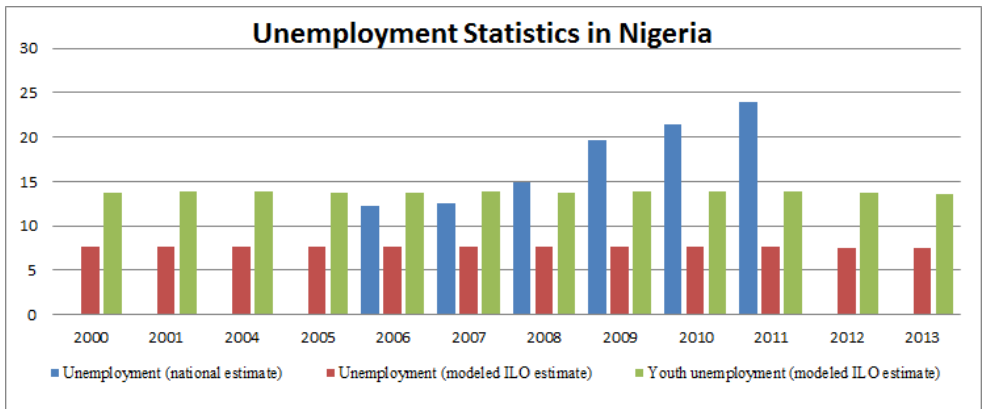
**Figure 2: Composition of Nigeria's export from China**



**Figure 3: Nigeria's Petroleum products export to China**



**Figure 4: Unemployment statistics in Nigeria**



Source: World development indicator, World Bank

## Theoretical framework

The article draws on framing theory in which the news frame is the “central organising idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration” (Tankard, 2001: 100). The advantage of framing is that it has the potential to get beneath the surface of news coverage and expose hidden assumptions (Tankard, 2001: 97). In other words, framing, “recognises the ability of a text to define a situation, to define the issues, and to set the terms of a debate” (Tankard, 2001: 96).

Therefore, dominant frames signify a set of social meanings that help to define social relations within a particular social context (Durham, 1998: 102). In his exploratory study of the media framing of China among East African newspapers, Wekesa (2013) concludes that the image of China in East Africa is under the “inter-play of both negative and positive media frames” (Wekesa, 2013: 35). Similarly, Gamson and Modigliani (1989), in their study of nuclear power for over a period of more than 40 years, show how various pro-and-anti nuclear power groups contested to define the issue of nuclear power to suit their interests. Hence, in a study of the New York Times’ coverage of the crashed TWA flight 800, Durham (1998) argues there is always competition between various interest groups to produce dominant frames in news stories.

## Methodology

A total of 31 articles comprising news, features, and opinions were collected from *Thisday* (21) and *Punch* (10) newspapers between September and December 2012. The two newspapers were used for the study because they are two of Nigeria’s leading newspaper without ethnic or ideological biases (Ette, 2012).

The study comprises framing analysis and questionnaire set up with Everything Journalism group on LinkedIn. The Everything Journalism group on LinkedIn comprises 2770 members, including journalists, journalists turned Public relations executives, publishers, media scholars. Everything Journalism is a community, where members share space and practice; shared identities; shared resources; and

enjoy interpersonal relationship, which makes it viable for the study (Baym, 2010:75).

Basically, there are two approaches to framing analysis: deductive and inductive methods. In deductive approach frames are operationalised prior to the analysis of texts, to verify the extent to which they occur in the news and are suited to large samples. The inductive approach involves analysing media content with an open view to identify possible frames, an approach well-suited to small samples (De Vreese, 2005: 53). This article will adopt an inductive approach to identifying frames in a relatively small sample of articles from *Thisday* and *Punch* newspapers. The unit of analysis is individual editorials, news, opinion and feature article because frame analysis favours whole articles as main discourse unit (Marthes, 2009: 355).

First, the article applied framing analysis to a sample of 31 articles including news, feature and opinion obtained from *Thisday* and *Punch* newspapers between September 2012 and December 2012. The article further sets up a questionnaire with the Everything Journalism group on LinkedIn.

The questions are:

1. Do you view China's engagement with Nigeria as providing opportunities for Nigeria and Nigerians?
2. Do you view China's engagement with Nigeria as opportunistic?

### **Results:**

Two overarching frames emerged in the framing analysis of the text obtained from both newspapers: Opportunity and Opportunist. The two frames reflect the broad bi-focal prism through which China-Africa relations are depicted in the academic literature on the subject (Umejei, 2014). The opportunity frame is underpinned by thematic points such as *Investment and Aid*, *Partner for Development* and *China as a model of economic success*, while Opportunist frame has *Neo-colonialism*, *Exploitation* and 'sub-standard' China.

## Opportunity

There are 19 articles in this category that frame China's engagement with Nigeria as an opportunity for a better Nigeria. The frame is underpinned by three thematic points including investment and aid, partnership for development and China as a model of economic success.

### Investments and aid

In the article, *China in the heart of Africa*, an opinion article published in Punch, Kingsley Ighobor emphasises that China is following its commitment to Africa with action by way of aid and investments: "The Chinese government is eager to cement China's dominance by burnishing its image through initiatives such as a US\$ 20 billion credit to African countries to develop infrastructure and the African Talents Programme, which is intended to train 30,000 Africans in various sectors". The sentence speaks to China's propaganda that its engagement with Africa will aid both infrastructural and economic development in Nigeria and other African countries (see Brautigam, 2009:53).

### China as a model of economic success

Articles in this category employ the Chinese propaganda that often frames the Chinese model as a viable model of success that Nigeria and other African countries should emulate to achieve economic and infrastructural development.

In the opinion article, *Forbidden City (I)*, Segun Adeniyi, a former senior special assistant to the late President Umaru Yar'Adua, who doubles as a columnist and chairman of Thisday editorial board, paints a glowing picture of China: "It is obvious the ancient Chinese was a prosperous society, then they became so poor they were far more wretched than us in Africa, and now they are prosperous again. How did China do it?" Implicit in Adeniyi's statement reinforces Chinese official rhetoric, which claims that China has been able to lift more than 300 million people out of poverty and hence, African countries should adopt the Chinese model (see Kurlantzick 2007: 57). Similarly, an opinion article in *Thisday* by Deng Boqing, former Chinese ambassador to Nigeria, sustains this view: "Since China adopted the

reform and opening up policy in 1978, the Chinese economy has registered an average annual growth rate of nearly 10 per cent, which tripled the world average at the same period.” In another opinion article, *Lessons from India and China*, Dele Momodu, a *Thisday* columnist was emphatic that Nigeria needs to emulate China if it wants to achieve economic development. He noted, “China has climbed to the number two spot in the world. Some will even accord them the status of the world’s number one nation. You can call them names but the Chinese have shown that there is dignity in labour.” Therefore, Nigeria ought to adopt the Chinese model to attain economic prosperity and development. This view also speaks to Chinese official propaganda that its model is most suited to Africa’s development and prosperity (see Kurlantzick, 2007).

### **Partner for development**

The articles in this category construct China as an important development partner to Nigeria. In the news article, *Jonathan Urges Chinese Firm to Finance Road Projects* published in *Thisday*, the Nigerian government appealed to Chinese construction company, (CGCOCC) to help solve Nigeria’s infrastructural challenge by investing in road construction in the country. In the article, former President Goodluck Jonathan, who was represented by the Minister of Works, Mike Onoelen, was quoted as saying, “If your proposals are acceptable to us, we will present them before the economic council.”

“We need more infrastructure than any other country in Africa. With 170 million people, you can never go wrong; if you invest in Nigeria’s infrastructure and project finance, you cannot go wrong as recovery of your investments is certain”. This article reinforces the view that China is in Africa to help bridge the infrastructural deficit on the continent and Nigeria is one of such countries that is in dire need of infrastructure. Therefore, China is a partner for development in Nigeria and Africa in general (see Brautigam, 2009).

### **Opportunist**

Articles in this category are negative about China’s engagement with Nigeria. The

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articles frame China-Nigeria relations as unequal and exploitative, with China as a global power dumping sub-standard products on Nigeria. This frame is underpinned by themes such as new colonialism, exploitation and dumping of substandard products.

### **Neo-colonialism**

The articles in this category construct China as a neo-colonial power seeking to dominate Nigeria's economy for its own gain.

In the news article, *CNPP Faults FG's US\$ 1.1 billion Chinese Loan*, published in *Thisday*, the Conference of Nigerian Political Parties (CNPP) said China is consciously goading Nigeria into Chinese neo-colonialism. The use of such a sentence that Nigeria may be heading "towards an unconscionable debt squad and Chinese imperialism" by Osita Okechukwu, chairman of the CNPP, speaks to the charge that China's engagement with Africa is neo-colonialism disguised as partnership (see Gaye, 2007; Sanusi, 2013). Other words such as "anti-democratic, exploitative, anti-people" used to describe China's engagement with Nigeria by the CNPP leader constructs China as a global power that does not respect democratic ethos and whose economic interest supplants all others interests (see Gaye, 2007).

The CNPP position strikes a chord with Lamido Sanusi's that "China takes from us primary goods and sells us manufactured ones; this was also the essence of colonialism" (Sanusi, 2013). It also speaks to the concern expressed by multi-lateral organisations such as the IMF and the World Bank that the massive loans by China to African countries could encourage the accumulation of too much debt and strangle economic growth (Taylor, 2012).

In an opinion article, *Mandarin in Lagos*, published in *Punch*, Abimbola Adelokun contends that introducing Chinese in public schools in Lagos state amounts to a one-way traffic, which reflects late President Julius Nyerere's view on China-Africa relations: "it is the most unequal of equal relationships" (Umejei, 2013). Adelokun, a columnist for *Punch* newspaper emphasises that language is a means of domination and introducing Chinese language in Lagos public schools without replicating same



in China “will not bode well if this is a cultural exchange that places a preponderance of power on the part of China”. She argues, “It’s important to scrutinise the motive of China behind teaching Nigerian children their language and culture and mediate this so as not to place the kids at a disadvantage”. The fear of domination underpins Adelakun’s opinion article which resonates with Sanusi’s (2013) caution that China may become Africa’s new coloniser (Sanusi, 2013).

In the opinion article, *Chinese scramble for Nigeria?* Punch columnist, Patience Akpa-Obong emphasises that China’s approach to its relations with Nigeria is not different from the early European missionaries, who did not leave Africa empty-handed. She emphasises: “*it’s time that the Nigerian government reassessed its infatuation with China to ensure that it is truly an equal partner. If not, then it should have the courage to renegotiate the terms of engagement or simply bid its own Mr. Chen: “Zaijian!” or, “sanga sung,” if you want to say it in Efik!*” Patience’ article speaks to Gaye’s (2007) argument that China is not a philanthropist in Africa but in quest for its own selfish agenda (Gaye, 2007).

However, Professor Remi Sonaiya’s Punch opinion article was more scathing; with a screaming headline, *China in Africa, beware!* Sonaiya’s article was detailed and analytic of cover of the book, *La Chinafrique: Pékin à la Conquête du Continent Noir*, which depicts an African soldier, with his left hand clutching a gun and his right, a green and yellow umbrella over the head of a Chinese man. Sonaiya, a professor of French language introduced the story with a textual analysis of the photograph that accompanied her article. Sonaiya warns that history may be repeating itself with the Chinese as the new colonisers. The phrase “Africa might be entering another period of enslavement” speaks to the fear that China is another colonial master in Africa. Sonaiya’s opinion is tandem with the view that China is not different from the European slave masters and would, if not regulated, emerge the new colonisers of Africa (see Sanusi, 2013; Gaye, 2007).

### **Exploitation**

In the news article, *Controversy Trails Death of Two Workers in Chinese Firm*, published in *Thisday*, Mathew Imhombho, despite autopsy result that confirmed his

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brother died of asphyxia, was convinced there was a conspiracy surrounding his brother's death because to him, "The corpse did not look like someone that drowned because he bled from the ears, mouth and nose. Something just looks fishy two full grown men drowning at the same time in a pool that is not deep". The usage of such phrases as, "something just looks fishy" by Matthew Imhonbho, an ordinary Nigerian, to construct China is reflective of the scepticism with which ordinary Nigerians view China. It also reflect the widespread scepticism with which ordinary Nigerians view China's engagement with Nigeria but such scepticism often do not form part of policy formulation because the ruling and economic elites profit from the relations (Taylor, 2007: 632).

### **'Substandard' China**

The articles in this category frame China as dumping substandard products on Nigeria. In the news article, *SON, Chinese Firm to Tackle Fake Products*, DG of SON, Joseph Odumodu was quoted as saying, "80 per cent of the fake products that come into Nigeria were coming from Asia, with China as major culprit." This reinforces the perspective that China is dumping sub-standard products on Nigeria. It also speaks to the perspective that China, a global power, is emasculating Nigerian manufacturers by dumping cheap and sub-standard products on the country (see Obiorah, Kew and Tanko, 2008; Obiorah, 2006; Sanusi, 2013).

### **Interviews**

The respondents reflect a common pattern in which China-Nigeria relations is viewed from the bi-focal prism of opportunity or an opportunist. However, the views of the respondents is underpinned by the emphasis that China is not different from other emerging global powers whose foreign policy is underscored by the pre-eminence of national interest. Implicit in the respondents' views is that it is the responsibility of the Nigerian government to evolve regulatory policies that will ensure that its engagement with China results in a transfer of skills, technology, employment generation and economic development.

The respondent below reinforces this view:

*I view China's engagement with Nigeria as providing opportunity as well as taking advantage of Nigeria. But that is what other nations attempt to do everywhere else. It is the responsibility of the host nation to prevent foreign country from plundering their economy, while at the same time benefit from the engagement.*

The respondent below argues that while China's engagement with Nigeria, as other African nations is driven by its quest for natural resources to meets its technological advancement (see Gaye, 2007; Sanusi, 2013), it is critical that the Nigerian government ensures it is beneficial to its own development:

*China's engagement with Nigeria, and other African countries for that matter, is primarily driven by that country's need to source the resources to continue powering its economic growth, particularly in the light of the peculiar challenges represented by its extremely large population. It is also driven by China's desire to establish itself as a great power by spreading its influence as widely as possible across the world. The critical element in all this is the need for the Nigerian government to play its role by ensuring that all parties play by the rules and that the engagement does not become exploitative.*

The respondents below argues that every country is involved in some form of economic diplomacy, which means that China is not any different but added that it is dependent on Nigeria to ensure that China does not exploit it:

*Every nation plays some form of economic diplomacy. The Europeans played it, the American are playing it and the Chinese are following in their steps. Exploitation only comes into play when the host country lacks the structure and attitude that ensures that a healthy and win-win engagement is maintained. Does China exploit America or Europe exploits China? The core issue is having a known and enforceable structure and an attitude that does not allow exploitation. Where these two items are lacking, a businessman/ nation will do business his own way no matter the label that is given to it.*

The respondent below takes a different path. He argues, "I don't see China genuinely interested in helping Nigeria. They are here for economic reasons so the onus is on

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Nigeria to introduce policies that would also make them benefit from China.” This perspective is in tandem with Sanusi’s argument that China is another colonial master in Africa (See Sanusi, 2013).

However, another respondent views China-Nigeria relations as win-win and mutual:

*It's a win-win situation. I'd rather not use the term 'opportunistic' even though most nations are primarily guided by the so-called enlightened self-interest.*

While the respondent below emphasises that China is not different from other global powers, he however, argues that weak institutions in Nigeria give China the edge to exploit Nigerians:

*China's interest in Nigeria is no different from that of America or European countries. There is no doubt that when foreign investors invest in Nigeria, they create opportunities for Nigerians. The question now is, do we as a country have labour laws backed by strong institutions to enable the Chinese play the game by the rules so that the result is a win – win situation? The answer is no. Here is the reason why we are afraid of their aggressive drive to dominate our market. We know our weakness and that empowers them; hence we see them as opportunists and exploiters.*

However, another respondent argues, “*It is not China's fault that we have economic and infrastructural challenges, it is up to us to determine if we need their assistance or not.*”

The respondent below argues that China’s engagement with Nigeria represents opportunities:

*I will say China's engagement with Nigeria (and by extension elsewhere in Africa) is a sure-fire way to find jobs for its teeming unemployed population, though the ones so qualified.*

And finally the respondent below argues that China contributes hugely to job creation in Nigeria and thereby creates opportunities for teeming unemployed youth in the country:

*See, Chinese companies are contributing immensely in job creation in Nigeria. So, I have absolutely nothing against any business person. I'm only concerned that somehow, foreign business ideas and or preconceived ideas (not particularly of the Chinese alone), are being applied to do business in Nigeria without checks and with our nationals in near slave labour. Having said this, I believe that the Chinese business presence in Nigeria provides us a golden opportunity to understudy them .*

### **Conclusion and remarks**

Results from frame analysis and interviews have shown that while China is viewed from a bi-focal prism of opportunity or an opportunist, it is not different from other global powers seeking national interests in Nigeria and by extension, Africa. This is emphasised by Alden and Large (2011:31),

*The basic character of trade flows - Africa exporting raw materials and China exporting manufactured products- replicates Africa's economic relations with other external powers. (Alden and Large, 2011: 31)*

For instance, the African Union (AU) is yet to evolve a policy framework for engaging with China but on the contrary, in 2006, China launched an African Policy Document that guides its engagement with the continent (Focac, 2006). Therefore, it becomes expedient to argue that Africa's "loose approach to its engagement with China has aided China in exploiting individual African countries, which leaves Africa with the short end of the stick" (Umejei, 2014: 17; Taylor, 2012).

In the case of Nigeria, despite knowing that flooding Nigeria's markets with cheap Chinese products undermines Nigerian commercial operations and leads to huge unemployment in the country "much of this concern has not yet been fed into policy-making at the state level because Nigeria's ruling elite are charmed by the prospects that China's rapid economic growth holds" (Taylor 2007: 632). Similarly, the perennial trade deficit (see Figure 1) in China-Nigeria trade is yet to gain traction with Nigeria's policy makers in Abuja who ought to evolve requisite policy framework to ensure Nigeria does not become a dump ground for Chinese products.

While it may seem right to emphasise that China exploits the lacuna in policy framework in Nigeria to its advantage, it is valid to argue that it is the responsibility of the Nigerian government to evolve policies that will ensure its engagement with China is tandem with its national goals and aspiration. Therefore, it becomes evident that China is not the problem but the Nigerian government which is yet to evolve a requisite regulatory framework that will ensure mutuality and win-win in its engagement with China.

In other words, until Nigeria and other African countries engaging with China find it worthy to regulate their engagements with China towards achieving national development and economic growth they would remain at the receiving end of China-Africa relations.

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