

# Assessment of China – Nigeria Relation in the Transportation Sector: A Tool for the Growth of Small-Scale Business Enterprises in Nigeria.

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*Abstract- In Nigeria, various governments at different times had made various efforts toward solving the problem of infrastructure by seeking the participation of a number of foreign actors. The main objective of study was to assess the China/Nigeria relationship in the transportation sector as a tool for the growth of small and medium scale business enterprises in Nigeria. The study investigated how China/Nigeria relationship in the transportation sector affected the growth of business enterprises in Nigeria. The population of the study is 1880 comprising of selected major stakeholders in transport sector and managers of businesses in Abuja and the sample size was derived using Taro Yamane formula which was 330. The research design was survey and sampling techniques used were stratified random sampling technique and simple proportion. Data were collected from primary sources with the use of questionnaires. The statistical package of ordinary least square of simple regression was adopted for the test of hypotheses. Findings revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between Road Construction and Rehabilitation and business expansion in Nigeria, there is a significant positive relationship between Rail Construction and effectiveness of small-scale businesses in Nigeria and that Upgrading of Airport Terminal have a significant positive impact on service delivery of small-scale businesses in Nigeria. Based on the result of the analysis, it was therefore, concluded that China/Nigeria relationship in the transportation sector is a tool for the growth of small-scale business enterprises in Nigeria. In accordance with the findings, the following recommendations were made which include that the Federal Government should broaden the bilateral agreement with China to include water transportation. More so, the scope covered on construction and rehabilitation should be increased. Also, the Nigeria/China relation*

*on Rail Construction should be enlarged to include establishment of businesses in Nigeria where most of the materials for rail construction would be sourced.*

*Indexed Terms- Rehabilitation, Globalization, Infrastructure*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The need for a greater connection of people all over the world has been traced the advent of globalisation (Chibundu, 2010). Globalization involves the dynamic exchange of goods, services, capital, people, information, and ideas across national borders, leading to deeper integration of economies and societies (O'Brien, 2022). It aims to take off fundamental issues that are key to affecting free flow of international capital, a process that has been significantly accelerated by rapid advancements in information technology. This phenomenon contributes to the gradual dismantling of trade barriers and the growing unification of global markets. It also promotes values such as principles of market freedom, democratic governance, ethical leadership, equal opportunities for all genders, and sustainable environmental practices. As global economic integration intensifies, resource and input utilization becomes increasingly efficient, with countries and regions specializing according to their comparative advantages. This specialization allows them to produce goods and services at the lowest opportunity cost. Over the past few decades, many developing nations have made concerted efforts to integrate with developed countries to benefit from the comparative advantages these nations hold (Smith, 2021; Abua, 2004). This integration is facilitated through multilateral and bilateral agreements between countries.

The expanding bilateral relationship between Nigeria and China has generated significant debate among policymakers and the business community. China's growing involvement in Nigeria's transportation sector has sparked considerable discussion about the nature of the emerging partnership model. Evidently, Nigeria still records dismal performance in transport sector compare to China due to bad road network and dilapidated railway system in Nigeria leading to poor performance of small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) (Owoeye, 2016).

In order to solve these problems, it becomes necessary to form a strong synergy and bilateral relation with China who has comparative advantage and technical knowhow in construction to improve weak outcome/profit levels of SMEs. However, it still appears that bilateral relation with China may not have yielded the desired result as there are still challenges of poor performance of small and medium scale enterprises in the Nigeria such as slow business expansion and ineffectiveness of small and medium scale businesses in Nigeria. It is based on this, the study assessed China-Nigeria relation in the transportation sector as a tool for the growth of SMEs in Nigeria.

Since establishing diplomatic ties with China in 1971, Nigeria's relationship with the nation has consistently appeared to favour China, particularly in trade. China's exports to Nigeria have significantly outpaced Nigeria's exports to China, resulting in a substantial trade imbalance skewed in China's favour (Adebayo, 2021). In 2005, China exported goods worth \$2.3 billion to Nigeria, whereas Nigeria's exports to China were significantly lower, totaling \$503.9 million. Notably, mineral fuels constituted about 90% of Nigeria's exports during that period (World Bank, 2019).

Furthermore, the growth of Nigeria's economic engagement with China has been hampered by the country's inadequate transport infrastructure, which is crucial for fostering and expanding this relationship. Nigeria's underdeveloped transportation system is widely recognized as a significant barrier to business expansion and economic progress. Despite this, successive governments have made persistent efforts to address these infrastructural challenges.

In Nigeria, various governments at different times had made various efforts toward solving the problem of infrastructures in road, rail and air transportation with little or nothing to show (Abua, 2014). In order to address these challenges, effort have been made for more international participants leading to trade agreement on transport sector. Despite this intervention on transport infrastructure through China-Nigeria relation, there still exist challenges in the sector such as poor road network and dilapidated rail system resulting in slow business expansion and ineffectiveness. It is based on these, that this study assesses the China-Nigeria relation in the transportation sector: a tool for the growth of small and medium scale business enterprises in Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- i. evaluate the impact of China-Nigeria trade relation on road construction/rehabilitation on small and medium scale business expansion in Nigeria.
- ii. determine the influence China-Nigeria trade relation on rail construction on the effectiveness of small and medium scale businesses in Nigeria.

#### Research Hypotheses

In line with the objectives and the research questions of this study, the hypotheses tested for this study were formulated in null form as follows:

*H<sub>01</sub>: China-Nigeria trade relation on road construction/rehabilitation does not have positive significant impact on small and medium scale business expansion in Nigeria.*

*H<sub>02</sub>: China-Nigeria trade relation on rail construction does not influence positively on the effectiveness of small and medium scale businesses in Nigeria.*

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Concept of Bilateral Relation

The practice of maintaining diplomatic, commercial, or socio-cultural linkages between two independent nations is what is referred to as bilateralism. However, this have a far-ranging gap from other philosophical two approaches, which are multilateralism and unilateralism (Abua, 2018). The latter concepts explain actions taken by either one country alone or in conjunction with multiple other countries (Abua, 2018). A bilateral relation is formed when two or more states acknowledge each other's sovereignty and agree

to establish diplomatic ties. To promote conversation and collaboration, states with bilateral connections would exchange diplomatic agents, such as ambassadors, according to Abua (2018).

Common examples of economic agreements that are signed by two governments are and Foreign Direct Investments and Free Trade Agreements. It is not necessary to have a universal concept but rather to differentiate depending on the circumstances, since the majority of commercial agreements are tailored to the individual nations' traits in order to provide each other preferential treatment. It follows that governments can benefit from bilateralism by obtaining agreements and commitments that are more specific to themselves.

The nations will have to make a sacrifice, though, as the transaction costs are higher compared to the multilateral approach. Each party to a bilateral plan must enter into a separate contract. When member surplus (or "producer surplus" in economic terms) is high and transaction costs are low, it is often chosen. Furthermore, from a liberal standpoint, this will work if a powerful state wishes to exert control over smaller states, as a state's influence may be enhanced by the establishment of several bilateral agreements with smaller states (Chibundu, 2010).

- The Development of Sino-Nigerian Relations

In 1960, during Nigeria's independence celebrations, China, officially known as the People's Republic, were among the countries invited to attend, marking the first formal interaction between the two countries. Zhou Enlai and the Late Vice Premier, Marshall Chen Yi, sent congratulations greetings through their delegates. The nations freedom from their colonial masters was lauded by the Chinese leaders in their message (Owoeye, 2016). In what appeared to be a return gesture, Nigeria backed the People's Republic of China's (PRC) membership to be part of the UN, when it became a member of the global organisation (Owoeye, 2016).

After establishing diplomatic relations in 1971, The country ambassador for industrial re-construction and development, who was then Mr Akin Adediji, led a six-member team that travelled to Beijing. During their visit, the formal trading agreements on commercial and mechanical collaboration were

reached, including trade (Ogunsanwo, 2018). Since the trade deal did not affect the unchecked flow of Chinese products into Nigeria, which had been going on for a while and would soon be hard to police, it was essentially insignificant (Ogunsanwo, 2018). The economic cooperation pact was non-binding. So, in principle, Nigeria could theoretically request as many Chinese projects as it wanted (Ogunsanwo, 2018).

According to Ogunsanwo (2018), Nigeria spent a total of US\$69.86 million on imports from China in 1975 and US\$140.87 million in 1976, with a total of US\$8.85 million in exports to China over the same time period. In 1978, with foreign reserves on the decline, the nation's authorities became worried on the state of the country's negative trade disproportion. The result was that in October 1978, Geng Biao, the vice premier of China, paid a visit. The two nations have decided to work together in the agricultural, industrial, and commercial spheres as a result of the talks. To start resolving the trade deficit, China has committed to purchasing cotton, cocoa, palm kernels, and cashew nuts (Owoeye, 2016).

The Sani Abacha administration began the diplomatic process that brought China closer to Nigeria. With the sanctions imposed on Nigeria in 1995 for rights violations, the country's administration began to seek "East" as a solution. While China bought products and services from Nigeria valued at N39.360 million in 1996, the trade balance was substantially skewed in favour of China, according to data (Chibundu, 2010). In contrast, Nigeria imported N5.388 billion from China. Unfortunately, China's advantage in the trade balance persisted. But it became a big deal for Nigeria's federal government, and within government circles, the consensus was that China could significantly improve its trade balance by importing agrarian products that Nigeria had in plenty (Chibundu, 2010).

Despite the signing of a US\$529 million agreement between the two nations in December 1995 to rehabilitate the country's railway—an undertaking that included the supply of components of trains, and waggons in addition to the revamping of track of rails were entered into—the project completion was not achieved by the targeted date due to the failure of Nigerian contractors to supply the necessary rail

supplies within the specified date. After this, oil cooperation contracts were reached. During that period, the Chinese were considering buying crude oil from Nigeria to use in blending and to get involved in the petrochemical sector (Chibundu, 2010).

During his travels to China in 1999 and 2001, Olusegun Obasanjo negotiated and signed a slew of accords pertaining to commerce, economics, technology, science, and investment protection (Abua, 2014). On April 28, 2006, the President of China visited Nigeria with the goal of strengthening the two nations' already strong bilateral relations. An MOU on petroleum cooperation was inked by the two countries (Udeala, 2010). As a result of this agreement, the Chinese government would be able to spend heavily in Nigeria's oil sector. China promised to spend \$4 billion in oil and infrastructure projects in return for four drilling licenses that Nigeria had previously awarded to the country (Udeala, 2010). A few weeks before his second term was up, he reached this deal (The Report, 2010).

Likewise, President Goodluck Jonathan has kept ties with China cordial. Contracts in the Nigerian economy have gone to Chinese firms. Government investments in electricity generation, transmission, and distribution total over \$10 billion, according to Nigeria's vice president, Nnamdi Sambo. In addition, the rail infrastructure in Nigeria has been revitalised with an investment of nearly \$2 billion (This Day, August 27, 2010; (Ogunkola, 2018).

- Understanding Nigeria's Small and Medium-Sized Businesses

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria are defined by the Central Bank of Nigeria as having an asset base (excluding land) of 5 million to 500 million naira and a work force of 11 to 300 (CBN, 2005). This definition was used for the 200-billion-naira Credit Guarantee Scheme. A small-scale firm was also classified as one with 11–100 employees with a capita of less than 50 million naira. However, small enterprises play a significant role in the economy of the country because they may employ an average of 100 individuals. Ondo state has a population of 3,441,024 people, which is fewer than 3.5 million, according to the records (NPC, 2006). Stable

employment for the state might be achieved with an average of 3,500 small firms that are well supported. While the World Bank and the Central Bank of Nigeria are leading the way in terms of access to financing, several state governments and public agencies in Nigeria have formed partnerships that aim to help small businesses achieve sustainable growth, according to recent studies (Alabi et al., 2015). Despite this, 97% of Nigerian businesses had less than 100 employees, according to a prior report by the Federal Office of Statistics (2001). According to this definition, 97% of all enterprises in Nigeria fall under the category of "Small Business," which encompasses companies with less than 250 employees. According to Ariyo (2005), these enterprises account for a larger percent of the country's jobs and active production activities. These firms are relatively the bulk of Nigeria's commercial landscape, as is true elsewhere. In a nation like Nigeria, small businesses coordinate crucial sectors that shapes the economic state of the country.

- Linking Transportation and Related Difficulties on the Expansion of Businesses

The equitable distribution of actual assets such as electricity, water, terrain, and internet access at an amount that is not detrimental to small and medium-sized enterprises is the goal of physical infrastructure. Regardless of whether a country is in an innovation-driven, factor-driven, or factor-driven economic phase, experts from all three have agreed that this framework condition has the greatest impact on the entrepreneurial environment (i.e., attitudes, activity, and aspirations) (Porter, 2012).

Inadequate infrastructure in Africa hinders company development and internal commerce, which has significant direct and indirect human costs. The primary goal of the often-cheaply-built roads laid down by European colonial powers was to convey raw commodities from agricultural and mining areas to the ocean, where they could be sent back to the mother nation. Transportation networks have been severely underfunded for decades, leading to inadequate, sometimes unpaved, and frequently inaccessible roadways during rainy seasons (Ogbor 2019). Infrastructure development is undeniably crucial to attaining all of the Millennium Development Goals

(MDGs), even if it is not officially included in them (with the notable exception of water and sanitation). Prior research has shown that developing nations can't achieve market efficiency without trade and transit facilitation schemes (Devlin & Yee 2015). Chowdhury (2017) and Damborsky and Wokoun (2010), as well as Sic (2019) and other works in the field, have emphasised the importance of infrastructure for highly productive businesses that sell to bigger markets. We still don't know how transport limitations affect the vast majority of microbusinesses in developing nations, especially in Africa (Mason, et al. 2019), such as a lack of fundamental infrastructure, roads and trains, improved airports, and public transport systems.

In order to address the issue of inadequate infrastructure, developing nations have considered and, on occasion, adopted a number of alternate options. For instance, the effort has been instituted as fundamental initiatives to help SMBs in the transportation, airport, and train construction industries. Another option put forward by the International Monetary Fund (2011) is to promote labour-intensive public works projects, which can provide short-term, low-wage employment opportunities in sectors like construction and local infrastructure repair.

Similarly, to how highways, airports, and rail projects are financed by the government, community-based infrastructure is also utilised. This research lends credence to the idea that logistics and transport are game-changers for SMEs in emerging nations. Most SMEs have limited purchasing power and inventory capacity, which prevents them from increasing sales levels, which demands a decrease in costs and ensure that the products get to the people that needs it and at a price that is comparatively fair to them. This forces them to makes regular movements, which has serious consequences in developing countries due to inefficient transportation.

- Foundational Theory

The foundation of this research is the realist school of thought in international relations. According to realists, who take a more simplistic view of international relations, every country is trying to get stronger. The most powerful nations will eventually

rise to the top, as they will be able to easily surpass the accomplishments of their weaker counterparts. According to the notion, a nation should always prioritise self-preservation and see power acquisition as an economic, social, and political necessity. Taking a stand for what is right isn't always possible for governments, according to realists, and dishonesty and violence can be powerful means of achieving national goals.

- Empirical Study

Danquah (2017) conducted an in-depth study on bilateral relations and regional trade agreements using the country Ghana, while also focusing specifically on the Ghana-China relationship. To achieve the study's objectives, Danquah employed both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. The study utilized secondary data gathered from a variety of electronic and printed sources. The findings revealed that bilateral relations serve as a crucial catalyst for accelerating economic development.

Adeleye et al. (2015) reviewed the impact of China-Nigeria bilateral relation on International Trade and infrastructural development in Nigeria (1988-2012). The result of the findings showed that China-Nigeria bilateral relation impact on International Trade and infrastructural development in Nigeria during the time frame. Ali (2011) examined the Impact of bilateral agreement on economic growth of Partner Countries: China and New Zealand. The result of the findings showed that both countries (China and New Zealand) had significant economic growth as a result of the bilateral agreement.

Fapohunda (2014) conducted an in-depth investigation into the impact of bilateral relationships on productivity, aiming to uncover how these relationships influence productivity levels. The study employed a structured questionnaire to gather data from participants, which provided insights into the dynamics between bilateral relationships and productivity. The findings revealed a positive correlation, indicating that stronger bilateral relationships tend to enhance productivity.

In a similar vein, Hye (2013) explored the effects of bilateral agreements on business performance, with the objective of understanding how such agreements

influence various aspects of business outcomes. The study utilized empirical testing to assess the impact of these agreements. The results showed that the effects of bilateral agreements on business performance are not uniform; rather, they produce mixed outcomes, with some agreements boosting business performance while others have a less favourable or neutral impact. This suggests that the effectiveness of bilateral agreements may vary depending on the specific conditions and context in which they are implemented.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The study assesses the effects of entrepreneurial education on the performance of selected small and medium scale enterprises in Abuja. The population of the study was 1880 stakeholders in transportation sector which comprises of 820 staff of the ministry of transport, 635 staff of the ministry for aviation, 51 staff from NURTW, 39 staff of SEDAN, 115 staff from SFCAA and managers 220. The study employed Taro Yamane's formula to calculate an appropriate sample size, which resulted in 330 participants. Out of the 330 questionnaires distributed, 319 were successfully retrieved, achieving a high return rate of 97%. These responses formed the basis for the analysis. The research relied on primary data, collected using a structured questionnaire, and applied the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) method to test the hypotheses aligned with the study's objectives. To ensure the validity of the research instruments, a pilot study was conducted. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a reliability score of 0.7, indicating that the instrument was consistent and dependable for the purposes of the study.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

*H<sub>01</sub>: China/Nigeria trade relation on road construction/rehabilitation does not have positive significant impact on SMEs business expansion in Nigeria.*

Table 1: Regression result showing Trade Relation and Business Expansion

Variable	Coefficient	F-Std. Error	Statistic	Prob.
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	0.54078			
C	9	0.731218	0.739572	0.5946
	0.31238			
RCR	2	0.028794	0.430030	0.0015

Source: Data output using e-view statistical package, (2024)

The Beta coefficient of 0.31 for Road Construction and Rehabilitation, as shown in Table 1, indicates a positive relationship between these infrastructural developments and the expansion of small and medium-scale businesses in Nigeria. This relationship is statistically significant at the 5% level, with a p-value of 0.001. This means that for every unit increase in Road Construction and Rehabilitation, there is an average increase of 0.31% in small and medium-scale business expansion in Nigeria, assuming all other factors remain constant. This confirms road construction and rehabilitation can drive the expected growth in Nigeria, especially for SMEs.

*H<sub>02</sub>: China-Nigeria trade relation on rail construction does not influence positively on the effectiveness of SMEs businesses in Nigeria*

Table 2: Regression on trade relation and effectiveness.

Variable	Coefficient	F-Std. Error	Statistic	Prob.
	0.19873	-		
C	8	22.85798	0.848167	0.4289
	0.13358			
RC	9	10.98331	1.214196	0.0003

Source: Data output using e-view statistical package, (2024)

The Beta coefficient of 0.13 for rail construction, as presented in Table 2, indicates a positive correlation between rail construction and the effectiveness of small and medium-scale businesses in Nigeria. This relationship is statistically significant at the 5% level, with a p-value of 0.003. This suggests that for every unit increase in rail construction, there is an average improvement of 0.13% in the effectiveness of

businesses in Nigeria, assuming all other variables remain constant. Consequently, this means rail construction can stimulate the operational effectiveness of these businesses in Nigeria.

## V. DISCUSSIONS

The analysis revealed that the China-Nigeria partnership in the transportation sector has been instrumental in driving the growth of SMEs in Nigeria. Specifically, the study found a significant positive correlation between Road Construction and Rehabilitation and the expansion of SMEs in the country. Additionally, the findings highlighted a strong positive relationship between Rail Construction and the operational effectiveness of SMEs in Nigeria. These results align with previous research by Danquah (2017) and Ali (2011), who also identified significant positive connections between bilateral agreements and business development in partner nations. The implication of these findings is that strategic infrastructure investments, particularly in road and rail development, play a crucial role in fostering the growth and effectiveness of SMEs in Nigeria. This underscores the importance of continued collaboration between China and Nigeria in enhancing the country's transportation infrastructure as a means to support and sustain SME growth.

The findings suggest that by prioritizing infrastructure projects, particularly in the transportation sector, Nigeria can create a more conducive environment for SMEs to thrive, ultimately contributing to broader economic development. This insight should encourage policymakers and business leaders to further strengthen bilateral relations and focus on infrastructure as a key driver of SME success in Nigeria.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The collaboration between China and Nigeria in the transportation sector has significantly stimulated business growth in Nigeria. This study's results echo the conclusions of earlier research, confirming that the China-Nigeria Bilateral Relationship on Transportation (CNRT) has positively influenced the expansion of SMEs in Nigeria. Thus, it can be

concluded that this bilateral partnership has been a catalyst for enhancing SME development, highlighting the crucial role of international cooperation in driving economic progress.

## Recommendations

Drawing from the study's findings and conclusions, we offer the following recommendations:

1. The Federal Government should broaden the bilateral agreement with China to include water transportation. More so, the scope of coverage on construction and rehabilitation should be increased.
2. The Nigeria-China relation on Rail Construction should be enlarged to include establishment of industry in Nigeria where most of the materials for rail construction would be obtained.

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