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CHINA AND NIGERIA

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Introduction

Nigeria's relations with China have grown in the last decade from the limited and intermittent contact that marked the immediate post-independence era to an increasingly complex and expansive engagement.

While, like most other African countries in the 1960s and 70s, Nigeria viewed China as a nonaligned developing country, it did little to foster business or even special diplomatic relations with the Asian giant. Nigeria's trade focused primarily on European and North American countries, which proclaimed themselves development partners. China's own economic and political challenges made it an unlikely development partner at that time. Following Deng Xiaopeng's reform policies of the 1970s and 80s, China's dramatic growth and modernization, and attendant industrial, energy, and market expansion needs, brought it into greater contact with Africa. Its new expanded presence offered a partnership seen by many stakeholders as an alternative model to Western relationships.

China's increasing presence in Nigeria, and elsewhere in Africa, has spurred much speculation about the nature of the emerging partnership model. A national debate across sectors on this partnership will be a healthy exercise and may drive more rigorous analysis of what best serves African countries' quest for human material advance; friendly, mutually beneficial relations in trade and politics; and stewardship of the shared heritage of the planet.

There is a tendency in analyses of Chinese engagement in Africa to view African perspectives on the relationship with China—and African government perspectives, even more so—as monolithic. In fact, perspectives within Nigeria are far from uniform whether on China's motives, on potential competition with Western partners, or on the possibilities of cooperation between old and new partners. This paper focuses on how various stakeholders in Nigeria view China's engagement. The study is based on interviews with a wide array of actors, including Nigerian government officials, businessmen, academics, and residents of Chinese extraction who have lived and operated in Nigeria for many years. Other groups interviewed for the study include Chinese diplomats in Nigeria, Chinese traders and leaders, and Chinese project teams.

The Evolution of Trade and Diplomatic Ties

China's rhetoric today draws on ties with Africa forged long before the continent's wave of independence. The nature of the relationship that flowed from China's early contact is described

as non-imperial in its intentions, an evocation intended to distinguish China's approach from Western colonial intervention and justify why China's renewed interest in the continent is radically different from the model of Western partnership.

In his address to the African Business Leaders Forum in Johannesburg, then-Chinese ambassador to South Africa Liu Guijin stated that this history, dating back to the Ming Dynasty, was proof positive that China's motives are directed primarily at helping African countries "improve their own development ability." He dismissed the characterization of contemporary China's motives in Africa as "neocolonialism" and "western noise," recounting how 600 years ago, Zhen He led the largest fleet in the world, 28 ships and 27,800 people, on voyages that brought them to three continents, including Africa. Unlike Christopher Columbus in the New World, said Guijin, "China did not occupy an inch of any newly discovered land or set up any military fortresses."

In the early post-independence era, economic exchanges between China and Africa were largely marginal, as language and cultural barriers kept trade levels relatively low in comparison with Western powers that had established strong colonial linkages. China's strategy was largely centered on the search for ideological allies against capitalism and opposition to Western influence. But despite China's role in the nonaligned movement and broader Asian efforts to woo African states in forums such as the Bandung Conference, the conservative Nigerian government in Lagos at independence was an unlikely ally of a communist government and did not rush to embrace its Chinese counterpart. Chinese premier Zhou En-lai's 10-country trip to Africa in late 1963 did not include Nigeria.

Under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, China's relationship with Africa shifted from a period of indirect political and ideological support to direct support for various national liberation movements. Nigeria, as a self-styled frontline state against white-led regimes in southern Africa, served as a facilitator of support for liberation fighters. This interface strengthened diplomatic relations with China but affected trade only marginally, because Taiwan remained the favored trading partner at the time. Nonetheless, this period saw an incipient expansion of Chinese trade relations with Nigeria. Hong Kong Chinese were especially successful in investing in Nigeria. At the invitation of the premier of the Northern Region of Nigeria in the 1960s to take advantage of thriving cotton production in the region, their investment helped shape the early days of textile manufacturing in Nigeria.

In spite of these warm diplomatic ties, which saw Nigeria support the "One China, Two Systems" policy and the return of Hong Kong to China, there were very few high-level visits to Nigeria by Chinese leaders for many years. The visit of a former premier of the State Council Li Ping in 1997 was the highest level of visitation. On that visit several protocols were signed on subjects as wide ranging as investment protection and enhanced cooperation in the electric, steel, and oil industries. Implementation of these agreements, however, was half hearted at best.

The volume of trade between Nigeria and China continued to grow at low levels until rapid growth turned China in 1993 from a net exporter of crude oil to the second-largest importer of crude oil in the world. Gulf of Guinea countries like Nigeria, which produce sweet, low-sulfur crude and offered developing markets open to international investment, were particularly attractive to the Chinese. As China secured various joint-venture contracts with Nigerian oil companies, often in exchange for low-interest loans and targeted development projects, the volume of trade rapidly increased from 1.3 billion Nigerian naira in 1990, to 5.3 billion in 1996, to 8.6 billion. Most of this growth was attributable to the oil sector, with a small fraction emanating from the importation of cheaply manufactured Chinese goods and products.

Nonetheless, many imported Chinese goods were often substandard, leading the Standards Organization of Nigeria in October 1996 to threaten China that a formal complaint would be lodged with the World Trade Organization if the situation was not immediately corrected. The Chinese responded by explaining that they had not deliberately engaged in the dumping of inferior goods in Nigeria and that it was often Nigerian businessmen of dubious disposition who were ordering products of questionable quality. Problems with corruption and unethical conduct by Nigerian businessmen and public officials would later resurface as a key obstacle in the Sino-Nigerian relationship when the Chinese blamed these forces for contributing to the ineffectiveness of a Chinese project to revive the Nigerian Railway Corporation.

Despite these challenges, the Sino-Nigerian relationship continued to expand as a wide array of development projects were contracted to the Chinese. Ironically, the relationship expanded significantly during the presidency of Olusegun Obasanjo, even though the president was seen as having close ties with Washington and London, which should have put him at some distance from Beijing. One major project undertaken was the Abuja All-Africa Games village that was contracted to the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) in 2000 to build some 5,000 housing units for international athletes participating in the eight annual All-Africa Games. The construction of the village provided an opportunity for the Chinese to showcase their increasing cooperation with Africa in a high-profile international setting. Today, such large-scale, public infrastructure projects being undertaken by Chinese contractors are being referred to as “prestige projects.” The launching of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)—a program designed to boost economic and social development for Africa that consisted of three high-profile ministerial meetings between 2000 and 2006—further cemented the China-Africa relationship, leading to a particularly important role for Nigeria.

By 2006 the tone of the Chinese had changed, and President Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao of China were participating in regular shuttles to Africa, with Nigeria as a major port of call. Hong Kong Chinese, who entered the Nigerian market earlier than other Chinese, as well as businessmen from the traditional mainland, were establishing new manufacturing ventures for export and local markets at a time when Nigerian manufacturing was uncompetitive and collapsing into a state of deindustrialization. Suddenly, Nigerian state governors began leading delegations to China—seeking investments, aid, and development partnerships—in the belief that increasing ties to China could significantly benefit their communities.

But the reactions of other Nigerian stakeholders to increasing engagement with China were mixed. This paper, utilizing personal interviews with various elements of Nigerian society, strives to explain how each group perceives increasing Chinese involvement in Nigeria, what accounts for these perceptions, and how each group’s positions affect overall Nigerian policy toward China’s engagement.

Perceptions of the Motives and Strategy of Chinese Engagement

Career foreign affairs officers, often the first point of contact for Chinese nationals and government officials, have an important role in shaping the evolving relationship with China. Their views on changing relations with China were expressed to the author often with more conviction than diplomatic finesse. Similar to the views of the Chinese ambassador Liu in Johannesburg, several of the career diplomats in the Nigerian Foreign Affairs Ministry stated that the characterization of China’s intentions as neocolonial were Western propaganda. While some officials expressed

certain reservations about Chinese intentions, there was a consensus that the partnership could offer greater benefits than collaboration with the West, which had left Africa impoverished despite half a century of aid. To support this view, officials cited a series of agreements among the West and African, Caribbean, and Pacific states dating back to the Lomé Convention of 1975, which they considered insincere, arguing that promises of Western aid often infringed on their sovereignty and led to meddling in the country's internal affairs. Conversely, they argued that China's no-strings-attached policy made relations on foreign aid and trade more manageable and user friendly.

There were some aspects of China's engagement that foreign ministry officials thought could be improved and needed increased attention, although none of these complaints was serious enough to threaten the overall relationship. Officials noted that China has a tendency to deal with Africa as a monolith rather than individual countries with different goals and potentials. This is an area where they believed the Western approach of treating each African country as a separate entity was a healthier strategy. Officials also voiced unease about the possible emergence of an unbalanced system in which the Chinese would become the dominant power and Africans would lack the capacity to exert their own influence.

Similar apprehension existed about the realities of technology transfer and job creation for Nigerian citizens. Public officials outside the foreign affairs sector explained that although Chinese businesses are more attractive partners because the development gap is less daunting than with the West, actual technological transfer and job creation is low because the Chinese import in their own labor. They also complained that when Africans have an opportunity to gain employment in Chinese industries, labor conditions do not meet African standards. Some referred to "slave-like" conditions, citing the example of the September 2002 fire at a Chinese-owned factory in Lagos in which at least 37 Nigerians were trapped after a factory foreman reportedly locked the building doors. Lastly, there were references to illegal enterprise and criminal activity. It was mentioned that customs officials had to shut down a Chinatown in Lagos because many contraband items were being sold openly. In this instance the shut down did not last long, because the city's first lady, facing pressure from shoppers who appreciated cheap Chinese goods, sometimes at a third the going rate, agreed to revoke the suspension.

The shopping example is an important illustration of how Nigerian officials view Chinese engagement in their country. Overall, they welcome Chinese involvement and see the potential for great benefits for Nigerians, but they also have serious reservations about some of the negative consequences that have occurred. This has created a vociferous, but healthy, debate among public officials about how their relationship with China can be better managed.

Officials welcomed the Chinese policy of aid without strings attached but expressed concern that some of the support for grand infrastructure development that had been agreed to, such as railway modernization, had not been implemented. This has led to Chinese and Nigerian officials trading blame on whose bureaucratic bottlenecks are responsible for the lack of project effectiveness. On the other hand, some projects were cited as being very productive. Officials explained that the recent donation of firefighting equipment to one of the states in southwest Nigeria was aimed at immediate utility and not constrained by traditions of project justification, which Western donors demand.

Officials were also concerned about a low-level commitment to human dignity and individual freedom in China's collectivist tradition. They argued that these traditions could on the one hand encourage human rights abuses by the Nigerian government, but on the other hand could serve

as a positive societal force. Some commented that if these traditions were applied appropriately, they might result in a more disciplined society and possibly help to tackle such important Nigerian problems as corruption. Ultimately, there was consensus that a middle ground, balancing Western over involvement or meddlesomeness with Chinese traditions of noninterference, would best serve Nigerian development interests.

Lastly, there was a debate on whether Chinese concern for their own citizens, and China's overall approach to Nigeria, was changing over time. Nigerians remarked, for example, that the strong interest of Chinese officials in the fate of a Chinese engineer who was kidnapped while helping set up a motorcycle assembly plant in Anambra State was different from previous traditions in which the well-being of Chinese citizens abroad drew little official attention. Similarly, there was debate on how long the Chinese policy of noninterference could last. Nigerian officials suggested that kidnappings could affect China's disposition to investing in such states or, on the other hand, could pressure them to get involved in local politics. Proximity to the high-risk operating environment of the Niger Delta is said to be behind a Chinese decision to terminate a major industrial park agreement with Iwo State and relocate it to Ogun State. Even though some expressed the views that political pressure from former Nigerian president Obasanjo, who is from Ogun State, led to the decision to relocate the project, the official Chinese position is that Imo is a neighbor to the trouble spot of Rivers State in the Niger Delta.

The Business Community

The business community exhibited mixed feelings about Chinese business incursions into Nigeria. Similar to Nigerian public officials, the Nigerian business community felt that China's engagement could bring substantial benefits to their own enterprises but also identified a few problem areas that needed to be more adequately addressed.

Nigerian businessmen welcomed the opportunity of trading with a lower-cost economy than those of their traditional trading partners and valued the ability to purchase lower-cost merchandise. They expressed interest in learning from Chinese manufacturers and business models that have enabled some Nigerians to manufacture and export profitably at a time when the country has been witnessing a collapse in manufacturing and deindustrialization, ostensibly because of poor infrastructure. Despite the challenges of operating in Nigeria, one Chinese manufacturer is in fact shipping the goods he manufactures in Nigeria to China. Using empty containers from goods shipped to Nigeria, he is able to profitably export goods by taking advantage of lower transport costs.

Local businessmen commented that they greatly benefitted from the willingness of many Chinese partners to arrange financing for their projects. This was seen as an opportunity to engage in joint ventures while also learning from Chinese business practices. Another incentive for doing business with the Chinese is the willingness of Chinese expatriates to accept the same living conditions offered to local workers. Nigerians commented that this was often an impediment when dealing with expatriates from other countries. It was argued that the reduced costs of hiring Chinese expatriates made Nigerians more competitive with large Western multinational corporations.

In spite of these benefits, members of the Nigerian business community raised serious concerns about a few particular aspects of Chinese business practices. Overall, the nature of their grievances seemed to reflect a broader concern that Chinese engagement in Africa is better for the Chinese than it is for Nigerians. While some Nigerians are in fact benefitting, they seem to be merely riding the coattails of the Chinese businessmen who are making the most money.

Nigerian businessmen cited a few reasons as to why the Chinese have been so successful. First, many believed that the Nigerian government, during the Obasanjo years, courted the Chinese at the expense of local manufacturers by manipulating tariffs to encourage Chinese imports. This has led many Nigerians to accuse the Chinese of dumping cheap Chinese products onto local markets, stifling the competitiveness of domestic production. Second, Nigerians have indicated that poor Chinese labor practices persist. Largely unchecked by the Nigerian government, the Chinese have a distinct advantage by paying “slave wages” for dangerous work that most Nigerians will not undertake. Lastly, some Nigerian businessmen commented that there is stiff competition between China and Taiwan for the hearts of businessmen in Nigeria. Long-time residents in Nigeria, originally from Hong Kong, have gone to great lengths in the media to discourage participation in Taiwanese trade. This indicated that many may have felt that fair competition and access to markets were not a reality in Nigeria and that the business environment is dominating by the Chinese.

Engaging the Private Sector

For many years, China’s economic engagement with Nigeria was limited. Relations stayed at the government-to-government level, consisting of aid agreements and development projects. However, relations have since greatly expanded into the private sector, with investment often directly encouraged by both the Nigerian and Chinese governments. The Chinese business presence, previously limited to the venturing of Hong Kong textile producers and steel processors, is increasingly being replaced by big commitments from Chinese financial institutions. The climate in Nigeria now features Nigerian consultants marketing themselves as having the capacity to manage project financing from China. The acquisition of a stake in Standard Chartered Bank, one of Africa’s leading banks, as well as a stake in IBTC-Chartered Bank in Nigeria, by one of China’s largest banks, has significantly raised China’s investment profile. As Chinese banks continue to support Chinese enterprise in Nigeria, a surge in the level of business involvement is expected to grow sharply.

Outreach to local communities has also shifted. Early Chinese business engagement into Nigeria featured limited contact with the local community, with the exception of the customer interface. In the new era of Chinese enterprise, trading has been a larger part of the picture with big Chinese retail markets increasingly making contact with local African communities. The Chinese footprint in Africa and Nigeria is now much larger, with everyday Africans conscious of this involvement.

The difference in approach between China and the West toward local communities in Africa has been radical, but the jury still seems to be out on which method Africans prefer. China and the West vary significantly in their approach toward corporate social responsibility (CSR). While companies from the West have tended to institutionalize CSR, promoting it as part of a public relations program to win goodwill, Chinese businessmen are more eclectic and personal in their approach. Their response to individual distress and community trouble has been known to be impassioned and generous, yet they do not seem to attract particular attention for an approach to corporate social responsibility. It was noted that some Chinese companies and businesses have tried to be more proactive before engaging in high-risk conflict zones such as the Niger Delta. Chinese consulate officers in Lagos stressed an experience different from those of Western firms in the Niger Delta, where companies would set up farms and help to build schools before pursuing business prospects.

Development Cooperation

As China attempted to win the battle for the hearts and minds of Africans during the Cold War days, it emphasized its nonaligned credentials and tried to become known for its no-strings-attached development assistance. Today, as it raises its profile of economic interest in Africa to secure access to raw materials, energy resources, and markets for its manufactured goods, China has again tried to highlight its generosity and human approach to development. It has tried to stress the importance of coordinating its efforts throughout the continent in such forums like FOCAC while also encouraging strong bilateral relations with key countries of particular strategic significance.

Nigeria, China's second-biggest trading partner, an important source for future petroleum and gas supplies, and a country with strong ties to Western businesses, has enjoyed increasing attention as a strategic country of focus for the Chinese. Beijing has engaged in a series of high-level visits, from the presidential level to leaders of subnational governments and the work of the Nigeria-China Joint Commission, in order to develop and strengthen its ties to this important Gulf of Guinea state.

Notwithstanding its interest in Nigeria's petroleum sector, China's development assistance also attempts to strengthen infrastructure and revive the agricultural sector. In agriculture, a tripartite agreement involving China, Nigeria, and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), pledged the deployment of 500 Chinese experts to help with food production and water conservancy in arid regions of the country. Already, 400 of the 500 pledged experts are hard at work in Nigeria. In addition to the development of the agricultural sector, several protocols and agreements in the last few years have resulted in several Chinese companies, from both the public and private sectors, becoming active in rehabilitation and expansion in such areas as electricity, road and rail transportation, and telecommunications. The companies that have entered the Nigerian market to work on these important initiatives include ZTE Company, Alcatel-Shangai-Bell, and China Putian.

Unfortunately, despite all these efforts, there was agreement among several public officials that the Nigerian government has not done enough to get organized and act together to tap into the goodwill of the Chinese in order to expand development outside of the petroleum sector. In particular, officials felt that more could be done to revolutionize Nigeria's laggard agricultural sector, which has the potential for creating millions of jobs and diversifying the base of the economy that has been so dependent on oil.

China's Growing Economic Interest: Impact on Economic Growth In Nigeria

Will Chinese aid, trade, and corporate social responsibility help reduce Nigerian poverty and drive growth? A growth-driver framework that identifies six key sets of variables that, if affected positively, have the potential to drive sustainable economic growth, helps to evaluate Nigeria's prospects. In order for sustained growth and development to occur, demonstrable progress must be achieved in the areas of policy choices, institutions, human capital, entrepreneurship, culture, and leadership.¹

1. See Pat Utomi, *Managing Uncertainty: Competition and Strategy in Emerging Economies* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1998).

Policy Choices. Interviews with a wide array of Nigerian actors, as well as accumulated data, suggest that Nigerian policymakers, including national and local officials, are not setting policies that will have the strongest possible impact on Nigeria's long-term economic growth for the widest array of its citizens. While many of the current policies being pursued are likely to benefit Nigeria and significantly contribute to economic development in some areas, the strategies seem to neglect essential long-term needs, important segments of the population, and the targeting of essential sectors leading to a diversified economy. For instance, even though evidence suggests that much profit can come to Nigeria by stimulating agriculture through some of the same policies that helped benefit an industrializing China, a robust agricultural development program remains to be seen. Similarly, although development models suggest that a strong middle class is the backbone of growth, the government has not focused its attention on providing basic needs to a broad segment of the population.

Institutions. The evidence suggests that Nigeria is dramatically underperforming in spite of strong revenue flows from high-priced crude oil exports. Various bureaucratic obstacles and a lack of strong institutions have led to constrained progress in areas of infrastructure, agriculture, and technology transfer. Similarly, widespread corruption has not transferred wealth to the lower classes and has stifled foreign direct investment in the nonpetroleum sector. Until Nigeria can develop credible, accountable, and transparent institutions, a free-market system that encourages investment, diversification, and competition is unlikely to emerge.

Human Capital. The case study also suggests that on human capital development, language barriers and cultural differences weigh heavily against the transfer of technological skills and education from Chinese to Nigerian citizens. Because cheap Chinese labor is often used, large industrial projects rarely transfer skills to local African populations.

Entrepreneurship. Of all the variables that lead to sustained economic growth, interviews suggest that a strong degree of progress has been made in the development of Nigerian entrepreneurs. Some Nigerian businessmen have learned to export successfully by using Chinese models and have profited by partnering in joint ventures with the Chinese. Nonetheless, language and cultural barriers have resulted in relatively small and educated elite as the primary beneficiaries.

Culture/Leadership. Nigeria's elite officials have made China's engagement a priority, but the strongest leadership has been observed on the Chinese side. African leaders have dictated to the Chinese which development projects they would like to undertake, but the absence of true leaders who are willing to stand up and articulate a long-term development strategy that adequately addresses the needs of the majority of Nigerian citizens remains a key challenge. Nigeria's rampant corruption has also proven to be a serious cultural obstacle that must be overcome if Nigeria is to successfully leverage its demands vis-à-vis China.

Recommendations

- Nigeria's first priority lies in developing the capacity to better manage its own policies toward China's engagement. Nigeria needs to realize that China's engagement gives it a unique opportunity to significantly expand its development and articulate a comprehensive strategy that addresses its long-term needs. The Nigerian government should avoid short-term fixes and front-loaded deals with the Chinese and move beyond arrangements that focus solely on the petroleum sector. High commodity prices are only a temporary vehicle that can be utilized to drive Nigeria's economy into a more economically diversified state, the true mechanism for sustained growth.

- Nigeria should focus on how China's engagement in Africa fits into the broader picture of international engagement. In particular, Nigeria has an opportunity to diversify its development by balancing Western assistance with that of China but needs to better understand how each type of aid can be beneficial, and to what sectors, in order to implement a successful strategy. For instance, China's experience as a more disciplined society has the potential to curb corruption in Nigeria, while the United States' commitment to human rights and transparency restrain an abuse of power.
- Nigerians should learn from the successes and failures of other states' relations with China and their policies toward development, while also learning from their own experiences. Nigeria should undertake a thorough review to investigate what policies have been beneficial for Nigeria's long-term development and what areas need improvement. Nigeria should also more closely examine the United States' relationship with China and replicate successful policies. The United States has a long history of trade disputes with China, challenging it in such multilateral institutions as the World Trade Organization. Nigeria appeared successful in its ability to confront China when it was being inundated with inferior goods by threatening a WTO complaint. Whether they learned anything from the U.S. experience is unclear, but Nigerians could certainly tap into the vast array of Western expertise on how to better manage a difficult economic relationship and how to protect important sectors of the economy against foreign competition.
- Nigerians should be pragmatic as they strive to "build institutions." Past attempts to build institutions in Nigeria and other corrupt societies have shown that just uprooting and transplanting institutions does not work. The process is evolutionary in nature and dependent on political will and strong leadership to make the necessary changes. Most importantly, there needs to be transparent oversight, largely monitored by a large middle class. Since a large middle class is dependent on sustained economic growth, it will take time to build credible institutions, but small steps can be taken. One of the most critical elements in institution building is support for civil society organizations and social enterprises that enable the emergence of market institutions, transparent and accountable governance, and budget-monitoring mechanisms. Nigerian civil society organizations should press the Nigerian government to make their processes more transparent and to join such programs as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI).
- Greater emphasis should be placed on building human capital and overcoming language and cultural barriers to facilitate the transfer of business knowledge and technology to a wider array of the Nigerian population. Exchanges between Chinese and Nigerian businessmen in the manufacturing sector seem to be a first step, but Nigerian businessmen need to develop the capacity to become leading entrepreneurs independent of the Chinese. World class business schools and public administration institutes focusing on building competences, leadership skills, and values need to be more greatly supported in Nigeria.
- Advances in entrepreneurial skills need to be accompanied by similar advances in building a culture of leadership that is not only concerned about enriching themselves but about enriching their country as well. The fact that Nigerian businessmen have been accused of ordering the same inferior products that Nigerian citizens have complained about demonstrates that stronger values are needed. Nigeria needs business leaders who are willing to press for reform and advocate the added value of transparent business practices. The limited success of the Lagos Business School in its passionate emphasis on business ethics shows the possibilities for considerable support of such initiatives.

- Lastly, in order to meet all of these important needs, Nigerians should utilize their own talent by pooling together leading officials, scholars, businessmen, and civil society representatives to form a committee dedicated to prescribing ideas on how to optimize Western and Chinese engagement. At the same time, an inter-ministerial implementation committee drawn from the ministries of foreign affairs, industry, trade, agriculture, and investment promotion, should be set up to reduce all the protocols, using a critical path analysis of action plans, with civil society as monitors. On specific “accelerator” infrastructure interventions, like energy and transport, a project team with people seconded from the private sector, diaspora experts, and key government technocrats will be required to drive some key timelines.

Conclusion

While the possibilities certainly exist for Nigeria to derive higher value from China’s growing influence, Nigerians have not fully capitalized on the potential benefits. Far more needs to be done to expand policy creation, institution building, human capital, entrepreneurship, and the culture and leadership capabilities to maximize gains. Most importantly, Nigeria needs to develop a comprehensive strategy to more effectively balance the engagement of China and the West to leverage its own strength and create a plan for sustainable development that resonates with its citizens.