

NIGERIA-AFRICA IN THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE: MAJOR BENEFITS, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

The paper delved into the new Chinese global initiative of the One Belt One Road, which intends to integrate the world economically by connecting countries for shared future and inclusive economic growth and development. The paper adopted the descriptive research instrument from the secondary methodology and complemented by the international theory of cooperation. Findings show that, the initiative is capita-intensive, with China contributing a colossal amount of money for the initiative. It is an opportunity for Africa and Nigeria to explore the project for job creation, infrastructure and better connectivity of the people. The paper concludes that some of the major advantages that the Belt and Road Initiative brings to Nigeria and Africa includes: social cohesion, inter-cultural marriages, tourism, traditional medicine and most importantly African unity. The paper recommends a drastic palliative in fighting terrorism in all ramifications, the government should address the issue of banditry, kidnapping and armed robbery, train more and more engineers to international standard to maintain the infrastructure and invest more in the construction process among other things.

Keywords: One Belt; One Road; Initiative; Africa; Nigeria; Benefits

INTRODUCTION

The belt and road initiative is part of the Chinese new diplomacy which explicitly involves global inclusiveness and assuages the process of international trade. It is the creative thinking of president Xi Jinping which was made known in 2013 in Kazakhstan. The one belt one road initiative is the only one of its kind in terms of world history that truly integrates the world. There is a misconception that surrounds the project where it is being equated with the American marshal plan offered to Europe after the Second World War. The distinction between the two is

that, the marshal plan was meant to rebuild Europe due to the devastation of the war; it contrasts the marshal plan as it involves various continents such as Asia, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and other regions of interest. The belt and road initiative is not an aid, but a cooperative instrument that promotes investment around the corridors. In the origin of the concept, which was adopted from the ancient “Silk Road” but now modified, Kuo and Kommenda (2018) wrote that, the "Belt" refers to the overland routes for road and rail transportation, called "the *Silk Road Economic Belt*"; whereas "road" refers to the sea routes, or the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.

It is set to open up regions and roads for infrastructural development; investment opportunities; economic cooperation and empowering weaker nations to have infrastructure and market their economic products to the world along the corridors. The major mantra of the OBOR is connectivity of people, markets and governments through the rising economic networking of the project. When people get connected by infrastructure, the pathways for humanity to thrive become imminent. There is this popular belief in china that if you want to be rich build the roads. This is the rationale behind the Belt and Road Initiative which will fight poverty among global population, enrich nations, and integrate humanity for shared future. The project is said to reach its maximum target and completion in the year 2045, exactly when china is to celebrate its 100th anniversary.

The belt and road initiative does not come without reasons of some objectives to be achieved by the Peoples Republic of China. Some of the reasons why China needs the One Belt One Road Initiative have been outlined by Wenping (2019) and China power Team (2019) as follows:

- i. Expansion of China’s export markets,
- ii. The Promotion Of The Renminbi (Rmb) As An International Currency,
- iii. Reduction of trade frictions like tariffs and transport costs.
- iv. Developing and connecting hard infrastructure with neighboring countries will help reduce transport times and costs.
- v. Establishing soft infrastructure with partner countries will allow for a broader range of goods to be traded with fewer regulatory hurdles.
- vi. Raising capital for these infrastructure projects by issuing bonds in RMB will encourage its use in international financial centers.
- vii. Boost growth in its lower-income western provinces by building overland economic connectivity with Central Asia.
- viii. Diversification of china’s investment pattern.

- ix. Upgrade Chinese companies from local to international ones.
- x. Sharing china's development results with other countries.
- xi. Help to promote connectivity/trade of Asian, European and African countries and push for world economic recovery
- xii. Free trade vs protectionism; inclusive globalization vs Deglobalization

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Silk Road Economic Belt, Maritime and Polar Silk Roads: The Silk Road Economic Belt covers Eurasia starting from the mainland china and deals with six areas of development cooperation called “corridors.” these six development corridors of the silk road economic belt are (BRI, 2019): (a)New Eurasian Land Bridge Economic Corridor (NELBEC) (b) China – Mongolia – Russia Economic Corridor (CMREC) (c) China – Central Asia – West Asia Economic Corridor (CCWAEC) (d) China – Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor (CICPEC) (e) Bangladesh – China – India – Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIMEC) (f) China – Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). In an intellectual piece, Zonyou (2017) highlighted that the silk road economic belt is meant to connect China with Central Asia as earlier noted, Eastern and Western European regions. **The visual route of the economic belt can be translated under the new Euroasia Land Bridge starting from Lianyungang city in Jiangu, to Kazakhstan, Russia, Poland, Germany and reaches Netherlands** (Saleh, Lu, Muhammad, Sokvibol, Nazir and Apurbo, 2018).

This corridor remains ineffective largely due to suspicious attitude of India. Evidence shows that there has been an increasing volume of China's investments in Bangladesh (Sahoo, 2013). China has huge investment in Myanmar. During the 1988-2016, China's direct investment was of US\$ 18.53 billion, poured nearly into 130 projects in Myanmar (Malik, 2017). There are hydroelectric, infrastructure, mining, telecommunications, and oil and gas pipeline projects in Myanmar. In this paper, we would like to identify a number of threats to the ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative. First, the unresolved border dispute between China and India (Behera, 2016; Garver & Anand, 2011; Karackattu, 2013; Lal, 2016; Mahapatra, 2016). Research evidence shows that from time to time the Kashmir issue between India and Pakistan triggers conflicts and violence (Hill & Motwani, 2017; Lamb, 1994; Mukherjee, 2016; Rizvi, 1995; Schild, 2015; Shankar, 2016; Tremblay, 2009; Zia, 2014). Second, the killings of Myanmar's Rohingya people in the state of Arakan pose a serious threat to the regional peace and stability. The indiscriminate killings of a great number of Rohingya Muslims is a ‘textbook example’ of human rights violations that include genocide, rape, fire, burning, and ethnic cleansing (Alam, 2018; Haque, 2017; Hutchinson, 2017; Kipgen, 2013, 2014; Kyaw, 2017; Parnini, 2013; Ullah, 2011, 2016).

The most glaring example is the dispute over the Ganges and Testa water sharing between Bangladesh and India (Islam, 1987; Pandey, 2012). It is to be noted that India also has the dispute over the share of Brahmaputra with China. Several key stakeholders like Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Pakistan should be taken into the considerations as the politics of water is complicated (Bozhong, 2018; Chellaney, 2014; Xie, Zhang, & Panda, 2017). Prior research explored the complex nature of trans-boundary water resource management in the context of the Central Asian states (Howard & Howard, 2016). Adequate lessons can be drawn from those cases. Finally, cross-border insurgent activities along the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh, Baluchistan in Pakistan, and seven northeastern Indian peripheral states could also threaten the Chinese Initiative (Baruah, 2009; Hossain, 1991; Murshid, 2016; Rashiduzzaman, 1998; Samad, 2014; Sharma, 2012). That's why; China could consultatively take effective measures to resolve those issues of perpetual conflicts and confrontations (Saleh, Lu, Muhammad, Sokvibol, Nazir and Apurbo, 2018).

The strategic location of China-Mongolia-Russia Corridor is very important for China. Mongolia was the first destination for China's 'Go Out' policy. China has strong economic presence in Mongolia (Jackson & Dear, 2016) Russia and Mongolia are important countries from the perspective of China's energy trade and security (Saleh, Lu, Muhammad, Sokvibol, Nazir and Apurbo, 2018).

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project aims to add some 17,000 megawatts of electricity generation at a cost of around \$34 billion. India has objections about the CPEC as it is likely to influence the disputed border regions. Pakistan's port of Gwadar is strategically important to China (Boni, 2016). In South Asia, India's main concerns could be found in 'China's 'string of pearls' strategy to encircle India through the establishment of maritime influence-either through investment in ports such Gwadar or Chittagong in Bangladesh-or the establishment of basing arrangements with a variety of other states in the Indian Ocean littoral' (Clarke, 2018). In South-east, South -Asian and Asia-Pacific states, the super and great powers like the United States, India and China are involved in interstate competitions and rivalries (Guihong, 2016; Hagerty, 2003; Ikenberry, 2016; Khan, 2016; Malik 1995; Mitra & Thaliyakkattil, 2018; Womack, 2014). The Sino-Pakistan friendship is regarded as 'Iron brotherhood'(Shih, 2018). However, in the context of geo-strategic and geopolitical contexts, the Sino-Pakistan bond is treated as a 'collective target' and security threat to India (Ahmad & Singh, 2017).

The China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridors will link China with South East Asia and Greater Mekong River sub-region. It will work as common platform for industrial cooperation and the joint construction of transports along the Mekong River. China is focused to increase trade relations with Singapore and Vietnam and connect them with Guangzhou, Shenzeng and Hong Kong through high-speed railways and motorways networks.

China has huge stakes in the countries along this corridor. But there are territorial disputes between China and South East Asian nations. China has competing claims over the South China Sea in general and the Spratly Islands in particular (Fravel, 2011; Poh, 2017; Taffer, 2015; Womack, 2011). Now-a-days, China is making its economic ties with the bordering countries along the Greater Mekong Subregions through the constructions of cross-border economic zones (EPZs) and better facilitations of cross-border trade (Ge, He, Jiang, & Yin, 2014; Krainara & Routray, 2015). Despite these positive developments, China has land boundary disputes with several key states of the ASEAN (Amer, 1998). Constructive efforts are, therefore, needed to solve the long-standing unresolved issue that might hamper the proper implementations of the Belt and Road Initiative (Saleh, Lu, Muhammad, Sokvibol, Nazir and Apurbo, 2018).

China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridors starts from Xinjiang and covers five Central Asian Countries. This corridor will be an important gateway for oil and natural gas, running to Xinjiang from the Arabian Peninsula, Turkey and Iran. China has signed trade agreements with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to work on trade facilitation. Since 1990 China has become largest energy importer following dual track energy policy. Moreover, China-Central Asia gas pipeline starts at the borders of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and runs through Uzbekistan and southern Kazakhstan, and ends at Horgos at Xinjiang. Recent studies show that China is investing heavily in the Central Asian and African countries under its 'going out' policy (Busse & Erdogan 2016; Diop & Veeck, 2012; Geda & Seid, 2015; Kassenova, 2017; Niu, 2014; Sullivan, 2018; Wu & Chen, 2010).

The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road is the maritime initiative that starts from southern China and links with Southeast Asia, places like Indonesia, India, the Arabian peninsula, Somalia, Egypt and Europe, encompassing the South China Sea, Strait of Malacca, Indian Ocean, Gulf of Bengal, Arabian Sea, Persian Gulf and the Red Sea (BRI, 2019). In his writings, Zongyou (2017) used different nomenclature to describe the above routes as linking China with the Mediterranean Sea, Persian Gulf, the Middle East, South-Asia and South-East Asia. One major issue with South-Asia according to Zongyou (2017) is that, China has disputes with some of the countries especially as it relates to South-China Sea. The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road as earlier noted connects China to Southeast Asia, Indonesia, India, the Arabian peninsula, Somalia, Egypt and Europe, encompassing the South China Sea, Strait of Malacca, Indian Ocean, Gulf of Bengal, Arabian Sea, Persian Gulf and the Red Sea (BRI, 2019).

The Polar Silk Road is one of the latest among the characterization of the silk roads. It involves the exploration of the arctic region by China, using developmental cooperation as usual along the Silk Road. It starts from the mainland China, goes to the East China Sea, via eastern Russian Federation to the arctic

region. China seeks to explore the opportunity of the belt and road to harness the benefits of this region through international cooperation especially with the entities along this route, which will result in a global advantage. In the submission of the BRI (2019) the state council had issued a white paper that guides china on how to participate in the arctic region using the belt and road formula on 26 January, 2018 (BRI, 2019).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory of International Development Cooperation is being adopted to provide a scientific backing to this paper. The theory was developed by Lauri (1990); development cooperation of any kind may be developed by bilateral, trilateral or multilateral institutions. The china's belt and road initiative refers to the multilateral project that allows states to integrate, invest, cooperate and harness together the benefits of economic investment and infrastructure development. In the discourses of development cooperation, Lauri (1990) believes that, there are two major variables that affect cooperation which are: In cooperation, there is a common goal, toward which the interaction is oriented, and which is shared by the actors. In assistance, there may be common goals, but the very action of giving aid is oriented towards helping the other party to realize his/her own goals.

It is therefore discernible that China and Nigeria, Africa or the entire world, have one major goal, which is mutual or collective benefit of the cooperation that binds them together. The second aspect of the above analogy is assistance, where people look at American aid to third world states, concluding that it is not without interest; the Chinese assistance to Africa is what Lauri (1990) described as "aid oriented towards helping the other part to realize his/her own goals. Albeit the relationship that defines cooperation can be described as asymmetrical, but the aim and purpose of the cooperation should not be ignored. African states have had what scholars describe as obnoxious relations with the west, but Africa appreciates its relationship with China and willingly signs developmental agreements under the forum of China-Africa Cooperation and the One Belt One Road Initiative. More to the understanding of what unfolds between China and Africa, is the interpretation of the concept of international cooperation given by Lauri (1990). It was intellectually put that:

International cooperation designates all undertakings allowing international actors to achieve jointly fixed goals by sharing certain resources together. Less than integration, yet more than sporadic common efforts, international cooperation denotes to establish relations between sovereign actors willing to share some values together.

The above significantly shows that, cooperation just as it is obtainable between Africa and China, China-Nigeria and China-world, is not aimed at harming any party but carried out in a manner of mutual benefit and win-win

cooperation. In the process of cooperation there is the need for understanding each other, one another-hence the call for cross-cultural studies and language sharing. This, aids in communication in business environment as well improves people-to-people exchanges and gives room for trust to flourish. While addressing issues in the field of international relations, we always observe classically the contending paradigms that synthesize conflict, war and cooperation. The realist perception of anarchy and war in the global system may discourage cooperation for peaceful co-existence, making you to understand that you cannot trust even your neighbor and absolute abstinence might be applied. On the contrary, the other classical paradigm (liberalism) appreciates the concept of peace and cooperation, albeit the world is anarchic, but cooperation would surely abate tension, rivalry and conflicts within the global system. It should also be noted that the fear of anarchy without devising to cooperate, makes states invade others. When there is an instituted authority to govern the conducts of states, states would be restrained in going against their sister states and conduct their behavior peacefully (Lauri, 1990).

Since the consolidation of the Westphalia system, changing historical conditions have, again, caused modifications in our ideas concerning international relations. Perhaps the most significant change has been caused by the Industrial Revolution, which has brought up three basic developments in the modern international system: (1) increasing differences in power and wealth between and among nations, through the distribution of industrial capacity, (2) an expanding world economy, based on a system of industrial division of labor between nations, and (3) an enlarging system of national states, covering now almost all of the land territories of the globe (Adlaer-karlsson, 1976). The changing historical conditions of the global system have made states not to be on the same capability in all ramifications, hence the emergence of industrialized nations and others. This unequal polarization of the world was neither made by China, nor China supported inequality among nations and states.

Thus, a major feature of the modern international system is a multiple state-system, inside of a world economy according to Pearson (1969), characterized by increasing differences in industrial power and wealth among nations. Like any social system, an emerging global system needs certain rules and norms, or an order, for its maintenance. The state system as well as the international economic order is the primary example. The formation and maintenance of an order, in turn, implies cooperation among the international actors. With the existence of large differences in the industrial power among nations within the system, certain economic cooperation has to cope with special requirements. During the colonial era, the relationship between the industrialized European countries and the areas in the Third World were arranged largely on the basis of the colonial order, with sovereignty belonging only to the former. But after the World War II, with the demise of colonialism and the "civilizing missions" of the European powers, a new order has been in the limelight (Pearson, 1969). This global

order does not force any state or nation to subject itself under servitude, forced labor or colonialism. There are choices in international trade and political relations and states constructively choose their friends.

It should also be noted that, the Human Rights were declared as universal and inviolable rights in the 1948 United Nations Declaration. Second, the principal right of the former colonies to national sovereignty over affairs of their own was proclaimed in the 1960 Declaration of Independence to colonial countries and peoples. Third, nations have assumed the responsibility to attack poverty, and an international obligation of the richer nations to help the poorer has been proclaimed. Thus, development cooperation, in a large sense, may be taken to mean any form of international cooperation aimed at filling the following obligations and efforts: (1) strengthening the national self-determination of the newly independent developing countries, (2) guaranteeing the human rights and access to the benefits of international division of labour to their citizens, and (3) eliminating poverty through reduction of global inequalities (Pearson, 1969).

PRIORITIES OF THE BELT AND ROAD COOPERATION

Some of the major priorities as identified by Nick (2017) are as follows: (a) Policy coordination (b) Facilities connectivity (c) Unimpeded trade and investment (d) Financial integration (e) People to people exchanges



Source: Dhaka tribune (2019). Opportunities about the Chinese belt one road initiative. 31st July.

The free trade priority according to Nick (2017) is to remove trade barriers, increase efficiency and promote regional economic integration by working with other countries and regions to open free trade areas and to improve customs clearance processes. Financial integration deals with the quest to promote cooperation in monetary policy, manage financial risk through regional arrangements, increase cross-border cooperation between

credit-rating institutions and expand the scope of currencies settlement and exchange between countries along the OBOR route. Establish a regional development fund, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. On connectivity, the Belt and Road Initiative will focus on the energy, transport and infrastructure that connect Asia, Europe and Africa. Projects include a network of road, railways, air and sea routes, oil and gas pipelines, power grids and internet connections.

On Policy Coordination, Nick (2017) argues that, it is to develop plans for regional and cross-border cooperation and provide policy support for large scale infrastructure projects. China has signed inter governmental cooperation agreements with over 25 countries. Person-to-Person Exchange seeks to bring people from different cultures together to share information, ideas, and best practices, enable cultural and academic exchanges, and promote universal technical standards by setting up of the University Alliance of the Silk Road.

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS THAT SUPPORT THE BELT AND ROAD PROJECTS

There are many institutions that finance and support the belt and road initiative some of them according to the (2019) are: (a) Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) founded by 57 members and now expanded to 93. It is investing about \$100 billion authorized capital with focus on infrastructure construction. It started operation in January 2016 and has succeeded in approving 6 projects of \$ 829 million in 6 Asian nations together with WB (He, 2019). The second institution is the BRICKS Bank, a bank for an economic forum of the most rapidly growing economies of the world, comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. The bank is now called the “New Development Bank” (NDB). it was founded in July 2015 and started operation in February, 2016. The NDB approved first set of loans valued at \$ 811 Million for renewable energy projects on April 17 2016 (He, 2019). The third most significant financial arrangement comes from the Silk Road Fund. This signifies \$40 billion provided by China as contribution to the Belt and Road project.

In 2016, International Enterprise Singapore, a segment of Singapore’s Ministry of Trade and Industry, signed three memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with Chinese banks, specifically the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, Singapore Branch (ICBC) and China Construction Bank (CCB), to partner in BRI projects (Belt and Road News, 2019). This trend has made IES a financial supporter of the OBOR initiative. There is US\$90 billion partnership which includes financial services required for OBOR infrastructure investments. The CCB is also considering setting up a financial centre in Singapore to provide services and support for BRI investments and projects (Belt and Road News, 2019).

The World Bank is also a partner as it has expressed support for the BRI. During the Opening Session of the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in May 2017, the president of World Bank Group, Jim Yong Kim, shared the IFC is working with the Silk Road Fund and China's Three Gorges Company to develop hydropower in Pakistan. Other partners include China's Exim Bank and China Investment Corporation for the development of infrastructure. An estimate of US\$12.9 billion in trade has been allocated through global short-term finance programs (Belt and Road News, 2019).

The United National Development Program is also supportive of the Belt and Road Initiative. An action plan was signed between the UNDP and Chinese government which included the following five areas: information exchange, projects cooperation, policy coordination, building partnership and capacity building. Two multi-lateral European banks have also partnered with the BRI: the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). The EIB is committing 500 million euro (about US\$561 million) in support of the initiative and is "jointly backed by the European Investment Fund and the Silk Road Fund" to ensure equal investment in the projects (Belt and Road News, 2019).

The two major multi-lateral Asian Banks involved in BRI projects are the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). The ADB, a development oriented financial institution with the goal to reduce poverty in Asia and the Pacific regions, funded US\$400,000 in BRI projects in 2016. Although a small amount, it could signal the ADB's interest in collaboration with China. Designed to finance the BRI, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) was founded in 2016. China is contributing US\$50 billion of the total capital of US\$100 billion, with a voting share of 28.7 percent; India being the second largest contributor of capital, is contributing US\$8.6 billion, with only an 8.3 percent voting share (Belt and Road News, 2019).

MECHANISM BUILDING TO ACHIEVING THE COOPERATION

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO): as popularly known or in the abridged name "Shanghai Pact," according to Millward (2007) is an Eurasian organization that deals with political, economic, and security issues through an inter-regional alliance. It was established on 15 June 2001 in Shanghai, China by the leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The Charter was formally signed in June 2002 and entered into force on 19 September 2003. The organization was initially called the Shanghai Five Group, founded on 26 April 1996, excluding Uzbekistan, which later joined the group. Since then, the organization has expanded its membership to eight countries when India and Pakistan joined SCO as full members on 9 June 2017 at a summit in Astana, Kazakhstan. The Heads of State Council (HSC) according to Zhao (2004) and Menges (2005)

is the supreme decision-making body in the SCO, it meets once a year and adopts decisions and guidelines on all important matters of the organization. Military exercises are also regularly conducted among members to promote cooperation and coordination against terrorism and other external threats, and to maintain regional peace and stability (Zhao, 2004; Menges, 2005).

Albeit it has not been clearly stated, it is apparent that the SCO replaces the hitherto WARSAW PACT organization dealing with Russia, China and other former members of the Soviet Union. Colin (2003) supported this argument when he clearly asserted that “The SCO is widely regarded as the "alliance of the East", due to its growing centrality in Asia-Pacific, and has been the primary security pillar of the region.” Colin (2003) added that, the SCO is the “largest regional organization in the world in terms of geographical coverage and population, covering three-fifths of the Eurasian continent and nearly half of the human population.”

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN PLUS CHINA): it is said to be a regional intergovernmental organization having the membership of ten countries in Southeast Asia. it enhances intergovernmental cooperation and facilitates economic, political, security, military, educational, and socio-cultural integration among its members and other countries in Asia. It also regularly engages other countries in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond (ASEAN, 2015; NLS, 2009; ASEAN, 2012). it has been described to be a major partner of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and maintains a global network of alliances and dialogue partners. It is generally considered by many as a global powerhouse (ASEAN, 2016). ASEAN in the writings of *Gates and Than (2001)* was formed on 8 August, 1967, when the foreign ministers of five countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand signed its treaty. Brunei joined in 1984, Vietnam in 1996, Myanmar in 1997, and subsequently Cambodia, Laos and Burma.

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC): this is an inter-governmental forum for 21 Pacific Rim member economies (APEC, 2014) that promotes free trade throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Inspired from the success of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)’s series of post-ministerial conferences launched in the mid-1980s, the APEC was established in 1989 in response to the growing interdependence of Asia-Pacific economies and the advent of regional trade blocs in other parts of the world; and to establish new markets for agricultural products and raw materials beyond Europe (APEC, 2017). Headquartered in Singapore, the APEC is recognized as one of the highest-level multilateral blocs and oldest forums in the Asia-Pacific region, and exerts a significant global influence (Parrenas, 1998; APEC, 2017).

Table 1.1: Member states of APEC

Member economie(s)	Name as used in APEC	Date of accession	GDP (PPP) in 2017 (Millions of Int\$)
Australia	Australia	November 1989	1,235,297
Brunei	Brunei Darussalam	November 1989	32,958
Canada	Canada	November 1989	1,763,785
Indonesia	Indonesia	November 1989	3,242,966
Japan	Japan	November 1989	5,405,072
South Korea	Republic of Korea	November 1989	2,026,651
Malaysia	Malaysia	November 1989	926,081
New Zealand	New Zealand	November 1989	185,748
Philippines	The Philippines	November 1989	874,518
Singapore	Singapore	November 1989	513,744
Thailand	Thailand	November 1989	1,228,941
United States	The United States	November 1989	19,362,129
Taiwan	Chinese Taipei	November 1991	1,175,308
Hong Kong	Hong Kong, China	November 1991	453,019
China	People's Republic of China	November 1991	13,457,000
Mexico	Mexico	November 1993	2,406,087
Papua New	Papua New Guinea	November 1993	30,839

Member economie(s)	Name as used in APEC	Date of accession	GDP (PPP) in 2017 (Millions of Int\$)
Guinea			
Chile	Chile	November 1994	452,095
Peru	Peru	November 1998	424,639
Russia	Russia	November 1998	4,000,096
Vietnam	Viet Nam	November 1998	643,902

Source: APEC. "Member Economies". *Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation*. Retrieved 24 September 2016.

Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): In the writings of Lay (2003), the Asia–Europe Meeting (ASEM) is an Asian–European political dialogue forum to enhance relations and various forms of cooperation between its partners. It was officially established on 1 March 1996 at the 1st ASEM Summit (ASEM1) in Bangkok, Thailand, by the then 15 Member States of the European Union (EU) and the European Commission, the then 7 Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the individual countries of China, Japan, and South Korea. A series of enlargements saw additional EU Member States join as well as India, Mongolia, Pakistan and the ASEAN Secretariat in 2008, Australia, New Zealand and Russia in 2010, Bangladesh, Norway, and Switzerland in 2012, as well as Croatia and Kazakhstan in 2014 (Lay, 2003). The main components of the ASEM Process rest on the following 3 pillars: Political Pillar, Economic and Financial Pillar, Socio-Cultural and Educational Pillar

China-Arab States Cooperation Forum: The CASCF is a formal dialogue initiative between China and the Arab League (AL), which has currently 21 members. It was established in 2004 during a visit of the then-Chinese President, Hu Jintao, to the headquarters of the Arab League in Cairo, Egypt. Syria, which was the 22nd member, is suspended from the AL since 2011, “due to its government’s brutal way of dealing with political opponents” (Arab League Online, 2012). CASCF aims to promote cooperation in various fields, such as politics, trade, culture, technology, foreign affairs, as well as to advance peace and development through friendly exchanges. On the establishment of the forum, Hu Jintao, proposed four principles to guide the new era of China-Arab interactions (Xinhua, 2016; Kuangyi, 2014) which are:

- (i) Establish political relations based on mutual respect;
- (ii) Foster economic and trade exchanges to accomplish common development aims;

- (iii) Learn from one another via cultural exchanges; and
- (iv) Promote world peace and common development by cooperating in international affairs.

Forum on China-Africa Cooperation: This is an official forum between the People's Republic of China and all states in Africa. The forum on cooperation is not just concentrated on the general summit which holds every three years, but involves some other areas through which cooperation can be achieved at the zenith, especially by using dialogue mechanisms. Such mechanisms that made FOCAC successful today includes: (a) the ministerial summit itself (b) political consultations between the Chinese and African foreign ministers on the sidelines of UN general assembly (c) the senior officials conference (SOMs) which is held every year (d) consultation between the secretariat of the Chinese follow-up committee and the African diplomatic corps in China (e) the China-Africa business conference (f) the China-Africa people's forum, and (g) forums on agriculture, science and technology, finance, culture, think tanks, law, youth and women, have been major areas used in the cooperation between china and Africa (Balaam and Dillman, 2011).

With the emergence of china as a new global economic power (being the second largest economy in the world), African countries come to have confidence in China as a new partner in political, economic and socio-cultural relations in contemporary global order. China and Africa share many things in common- hence- for-further cooperation and representation of the developing countries of the world, china has taken the lead to establishing this promising forum on China Africa cooperation.

AFRICA AND THE BELT AND ROAD

The Chinese-built 756km electric railway project from Ethiopia to Djibouti started official operations on January 1, 2018. Africa's longest electrified railway, and the continent's first trans-boundary line, it links Djibouti's port with Ethiopia. In Ethiopia's Eastern Investment Zone (EIZ), construction within the zone has accelerated rapidly as manufacturers from parts of China as well as other countries have moved in. Meanwhile, the Eastern Industrial Park (EIP), owned by the Jiangsu Qiyuan Group, had attracted 82 companies and total investment of USD200 million by the end of 2017, creating 10,000 jobs, according to a United Nations Industrial Development Organization report (Standard Chartered, 2019).

Kenya is also a beneficiary of Chinese rail technology. The 480km standard gauge railway from Mombasa port to the capital Nairobi opened in June 2017, replacing a 19th-century British-built line. The new USD3.8 billion line cuts freight costs and journey time, and will ultimately be extended to Uganda (Standard Chartered, 2019). Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta signed off on a \$666m (67.5bn shillings) loan from Beijing to finance the

construction of a data centre for a new tech city and for a highway in Nairobi. The data centre will be based in Kenya's new smart city, Konza, located 70 kilometres south-east of Nairobi, and will be built by China's telecoms giant Huawei with 17.5bn shillings in Chinese funding, according to a statement from Kenya's presidency. The remaining Sh51bn was pledged by the China Road and Bridge Corporation for the construction of the Nairobi JKIA to the James Gichuru expressway railroad project. President Kenyatta also witnessed the signing of an operation and maintenance service agreement for the Nairobi to Naivasha segment of the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) (Standard Chartered, 2019). Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed met Chinese President Xi Jinping and announced the signing of several deals. The largest was a \$1.8bn agreement between Ethiopia and the State Grid Corporation of China to provide electric power transmission and distribution lines.

The One Belt One Road initiative and particularly the Maritime Silk Road, touches on a number of African countries in East and Southeastern Africa (such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Madagascar, South Africa), North Africa (Egypt, Morocco and Algeria), and inland African countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Shohana, 2019).

NIGERIA AND THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

Nigeria officially entered into the BRI through a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed by President Muhammadu Buhari at the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, in September, 2018 (Isaac, 2019). More than 126 countries (Nigeria inclusive) and 29 international organizations have signed the belt and road initiative. "The trade volume between China and countries joining the BRI has surpassed six trillion dollars with more than 80 billion dollars of Chinese investments in these countries" (Bukola, 2019). In addition to the assertion above, "the 82 overseas cooperative parks jointly built by China and the countries along the route have created nearly 300,000 development opportunities to all countries" (Bukola, 2019).

The Abuja-Kaduna Railway section is the first section of the Nigerian Railway Modernization Project, using China railway technical standards and connecting the capital city of Abuja, the state of Niger and the state of Kaduna, with a total length of 186.5 km and a maximum speed of 150km/h (Bukola, 2019). By July 26th 2016, Abuja-Kaduna Railway Project officially started commercial operation, becoming the first modern railway in operation using China standard in Africa. Nigerian Railway Corporation is in Charge of Operations while the CCECC offers technical support, training service and assistance to the commercial operation (Bukola, 2019). Currently NRC has 534 staff working on the Abuja-Kaduna Railway Project. CCECC has a technical team of 17 specialists providing technical support. The second Train Service has been put into operation since January 5th,

2018. The speed of train from Idu station is 90km/h and Rigasa station 100km/h. There are five passenger stations and four crossing stations along the railway line, taking about one hour and 56 minutes to run from Idu to Rigasa station (Bukola, 2019).

Abuja Rail Mass Transit Project is situated in the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria, the completed phase 1 is composed of two lines as Lot 1 A and Lot 3, Lot 1A is 18km from Idu industrial area to satellite town Kunwa and Lot3 is 27.245km from Abuja central area to the international airport of the capital, the total length of phase1 is 45.245km (Bukola, 2019). There are 12 stations set along the route of Abuja Rail Mass Transit Project Phase 1, 8 stations for Lot3 and 4 stations for Lot 1A. Apart from the main line project, a rail depot with an area of 24 hectares was also constructed close to Idu station to serve the Abuja Rail system (Bukola, 2019).

Abuja Rail Mass Transit Project (Phase 1) was signed by CCECC and the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) and began commercial operations on July 13th 2018. It is known as the first light rail in West Africa (Bukola, 2019). During construction of the rail an estimate of 20,000 local staff were employed. Since commencement of operations, this project has directly provided about 1000 jobs. During construction and operation, the project indirectly established an estimate of 200,000 jobs mostly in areas of material production, subcontracting works, equipment manufacturing and related services (Bukola, 2019).

The Abuja-Kaduna standard gauge railway is the first part of Lagos-Kano standard metrics project, which will connect the business centers of Nigeria with the economic activity centers of the north western part of the country. The Lagos-Ibadan segment is already under construction, providing opportunities for Nigerians, while the other segments are being planned. Due to the vastness of the country, the railway will cover a lot of stations between Lagos and Kano state, linking the regions together. The stations designed for ease of transportation are: Lagos, Agege, Agbado, Kajola, Ewekoro, Abeukuta, Oyo, Ido, Ibadan, Abuja, Kubwa, Jere, Rijana and kaduna. It continues from Kaduna to Kano observing other stations.

One other significant project of the belt and road initiative in Nigeria is the Lagos-Calabar coastal railway project, which covers areas from Lagos, Ijebu-ode, Benin-Ore, Warri-Sapele, Yenogua-Otuoke-Ughelli, Portharcourt, Aba, Uyo and Calabar. The project was negotiated by Nigeria's Minister of transportation, Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi in 2016, with China Civil Engineering Construction Company. The project as initially negotiated was \$11.917 billion. The contract was later renegotiated and came up with a cost of \$ 11.117 billion, from which Nigeria was able to have \$800 Million off. The China Exim Bank was deployed to provide funding for the project from among many financial institutions that finance the belt and road project.

Other belt and road projects that are up-coming to Nigeria were signed between the federal government of Nigeria and the People's Republic of China in 2018 at the forum on China-Africa cooperation summit. More than \$10 billion agreements were signed during the summit. Some of the projects are as follows (Ade, 2018):

- i. Funding for the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation, Ajaokuta-kaduna-Kano (AKK) Gas Pipeline to cost about \$2.8 billion.
- ii. \$400 million investments across six Nigerian States by Nanni Good Fortune Heavy Industries and Capagate Group.
- iii. National information and communication technology infrastructure backbone phase 11 (NICTIB 11), which costs \$328 million, to be financed by the Chinese Exim Bank (Premium Times, 2019).

CONCLUSION

Some of the major advantages that the Belt and Road Initiative brings to Nigeria and Africa includes: Job opportunities, infrastructure, investment, connectivity, social cohesion, inter-cultural marriages, tourism, traditional medicine and most importantly African unity. China has been cooperating and partnering with the African union especially in the construction of the institutional building in Addis Ababa Ethiopia. With the belt and road initiative in Nigeria, it will serve as a signal that it is high time Nigeria to take the lead and observe Nigeria renaissance in the continent towards fulfilling the dream of African founding fathers (unity of the continent).

The belt and road initiative has a myriad of challenges that need to be addressed for the sustainability of infrastructure in Nigeria and Africa. Some of these challenges are as follows: Social indiscipline that may attempt to destroy infrastructure provided by the OBOR project, terrorism, banditry, lack of maintenance culture, lack of technical know-how among others. These challenges are also intertwined as one leads to the other and vice-versa.

PROSPECT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The prospects to the challenges faced by the Belt and Road Initiative are: Fighting terrorism in all ramifications, the government should address the issue of banditry, kidnapping and armed robbery, train more and more engineers to international standard to maintain the infrastructure, invest more in the construction process. The major prospect that Nigeria has to adopt is the simulation of the China's Belt and Road Initiative for Nigeria, West Africa and Africa first, before it goes global. This can be achieved with cooperating with china. Nigeria being the largest population and largest economy in Africa stands the chance to develop her own simulated belt

and road to start up a major development initiative. The Trans-Saharan trade is not unknown by our people in Africa, where African traded with Arabia through North Africa in an array of goods. This is to be regarded by Nigeria as the Silk Road economic belt. It is also a historical fact that slaves were taken from Africa (especially West Africa) through the hinterland to Europe and America. This route can be made Nigeria's and Africa's Maritime Silk Road.

It is notable that, there is limited number of airlines activities in West Africa especially places like Liberia, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Burkina-Faso to mention but a few. People from Liberia for example travelling to the Far East, first go to Ghana, to Equatorial Guinea and to Kenya before getting to China. It is an opportunity for Nigeria to dominate the Air silk road of Africa, compete with Ethiopia or cooperate with Ethiopia to achieving that. It is not easy attainable as Ethiopia has gone far, but Nigeria has the advantage and the resources to invest.

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