

CHINA-AFRICA COOPERATION AND RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

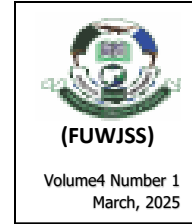
Olumuyiwa Adebayo Adetunji

Simon Jonah Otumala

Department of Political Science,

Federal College of Education, Abeokuta, Ogun State

Email: *otumalasimon@gmail.com; sjotumala@fce-abeokuta.edu.ng*



Abstract

This paper examines the dynamics of China-Africa cooperation during the Covid-19 pandemic, focusing on the multifaceted response strategies and the discourse surrounding them. While other research have examined the health implications of the pandemic on international relations, this study engages China's involvement with African nations through the lens of diplomatic, medical, and economic initiatives vis-a-vis dependency and sovereignty implications. Through a systematic literature review, the study attempts to proffer answers to the question on how Africa responded to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 virus when the bulk of investment finances favoured the Chinese domestic economy. Findings established that most of China's dealings during the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa were routed through companies domiciled in Nigeria and owned by Chinese citizens. The study concludes that the complexity of Sino-African relations in times of crisis exposes the opportunities and challenges posed by China's growing role in global health and development; and this situates China-Africa cooperation within broader geopolitical and economic contexts. The study recommends that countries in Africa have a fundamental and urgent responsibility of charting a holistic development engagement with China.

Keywords: China-Africa, Covid-19, South-South cooperation, global health, diplomacy

Introduction

The Chinese government offers Africa through the multilateral framework of Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and respective countries through the bilateral platform of cooperation and collaboration the generational opportunity to achieve appreciable developmental strides in economic performance and growth, trade and infrastructural development (Nwoke, 2009) what the West and previous partners have not been able to offer in terms of constructive development in the long years of diplomatic and bilateral relations (Ubi, 2014). The increasing positive outlook on

Africa's economy is built by China through massive injection of investment finance, loans with single digit interest rate channelled to critical infrastructural development is amongst other things the hallmark of a holistic drive to solve the many years of challenges in the continent. According to Raji and Ogunrinu (2018), Nigeria is largest recipient of Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) – about \$15 billion out of its \$26.5 billion investments in Africa as of 2016 with significant increase in the last ten years according to FOCAC report

The presence of Chinese government and its state backed companies has opened a new vista in the discourse relating to Africa's development agenda and numerous needs. Basically, Africa's long years of slow and less impactful engagement with the West who have been criticised as subjecting the resource-rich continent to unimaginable exploitation and economic pillage since over 150 years of colonial and postcolonial engagement (Bassey, 2012; Benvegnu, 2018). With Chinese robust engagement and cooperative framework of FOCAC established in 2000 as a new paradigm in Africa's drive towards appreciable development, the continent of Africa has been adjudged to have deviated from the existing Washington Consensus to an agreement with the People's Republic of China under the banner of Win-Win development cooperation (Mensah, 2015). The basis for the multifaceted engagement cover areas of economic, trade, and infrastructural development (Otumala, 2021).

China's engagement with Africa covers wide areas of interest such as trading engagement with Africa was estimated to be \$10 billion and at 2019 has exceeded \$280 billion, huge infrastructural capital and loans, human resources development, security cooperation and recently cooperation in the health sector through training of medical personnel's and supply of medical equipment to help confront the Covid-19 pandemic (www.sais-cari.org).

The holistic engagement with China is predicated on Chinese drive towards driving its development and also that of its partners. Therefore, Chinese foreign policy revolves around safeguarding national independence and creating an international environment favourable to its reform, openness and modernization efforts, as well as maintaining world peace and promoting common development, (Deng & Wang, 2005; China Embassy, 2012; Izaguirre Pechirra, 2024). According to Zhao Kejin cited in Alli (2017), developing countries will be the cornerstone of China's foreign policy. Developing countries and emerging powers are China's reliable and sincere partners. This agenda formed the basis of China's relations with countries across the African Continent and most decisively through the establishment of the FOCAC in 2000.

According to Monama (2015), in this respect, the FOCAC represents a quasi-institutionalized collaborative mechanism, designed and intended to

advance Sino-African cooperation in a rapidly globalizing world and expanding South-South cooperation. The strategic framework of the forum was structured to address areas of interest and further collective global interest including economic, infrastructural development, trade, investment and health needs of cooperating countries. The spread of Covid-19 and its accompanying implications and the response of China as development partner with countries under the framework brought to the fore the essence of FOCAC.

The comprehensive, collective system implies a high degree of cooperation and policy synthesis, producing productive, comprehensive, and collaborative arrangements, with customs, habits, and high-level friendships overcoming minor divergences of opinion in favor of long-term mutual benefits. The evolving FOCAC process suggests an increase in the volume of inter-state transactions intended to provide new opportunities and prospects for mutual benefits. This process encourages an increasing number of cooperative ventures, commercial endeavors, and political concord.

The 2018 FOCAC conference in Beijing specifically detailed Chinese areas of interest in Africa. According to the Chinese President Xi who highlighted eight major initiatives which will shape future China-Africa cooperation are: industrial promotion, infrastructure connectivity, trade facilitation, green development, capacity building, health care, people-to-people exchanges, and peace and security. The common thread throughout all eight areas is an expanded focus on building up local capacity. China pledged, for example, to help boost agricultural productivity, increase imports especially of “non-resource products” — from Africa, and provides vocational training through Luban Workshops.

However, in the midst of the above, the outbreak of the novel Corona Virus (Covid-19) has further raised the fears of developing countries and particularly Africa where indices for measuring human and national development are less encouraging thereby the categorization of the continent as under developing or developing. For example, the Per Capita Income in the continent ranges from \$15,234 in Seychelles as the highest and \$795 in Ethiopia as the lowest (www.globalpropertyguide.com) and life expectancy in Africa stands at 61 for male and 65 for female, while in other parts of the developed world life expectancy stands at 70 for males and 75 for female (www.statista.com). All these however have deepened by the Covid-19 which has questioned the generally accepted variables for measuring development in the Western World such as access to medical facilities and many others.

While the previous FOCAC summits and ministerial conferences have addressed development issues that affect members and parties to the forum, the 2020 extra-ordinary summit was convened to discuss the many challenges posed on the continent, its people and the drive towards

sustainable development by the outbreak of the virus. Africa's economic outlook and performance within this period has been affected by the measures put in place to check the continued spread of the virus. Measures such as lockdown, restriction on human and vehicular movement, restriction on air travels, dwindling oil price in the global market, cut in oil production placed by OPEC and finally, the loss of means of livelihood of the private sector which is supposed to be the engine and driver of economic growth.

The implication of an enhanced working relations premised on cooperative engagement was a major focus of the extraordinary summit and a fallout of the 2018 FOCAC summit in Beijing, at the forum, President Xi notes that "at the FOCAC Beijing Summit, we agreed to work together to build an even stronger China-Africa community with a shared future. Today's Extraordinary China-Africa Summit on Solidarity against Covid-19 is our concrete step to deliver the commitment we made at the Summit and to do our part in the international cooperation against Covid-19..."

Given the forgoing, the challenge of African states has become compounded and therefore the urgent need for rescue in order to save the economy from deep contraction and recession. The Chinese government been the epicentre of the virus experienced its first quarter GDP contraction by 6.8% in 2020 (Liu, Liu, & Yan, 2020). However, the national economy overcame the adverse impact of the pandemic in the first half with a demonstrated momentum of restorative growth and gradual recovery which is a manifestation of development resilience and vitality (China's National Bureau of Statistics, 2020), the economy has experienced an increase of 3.2%, the effect of this is based on quick government intervention through pragmatic policies which drove the rebound of economic activities in the country. The question therefore, of this paper is to raise core issues within the establishment of FOCAC as a multilateral framework for Africa's development; the implication of China's intervention in Africa within the light of the outbreak of the Covid-19 and the lessons to be learnt in the rebound of China's economy, how can Africa respond to the challenges posed by the virus when the bulk of investment finances comes with economic conditions that favours the Chinese domestic economy, has Africa not been reduced to a gift receiving continent?

Historical Overview of China-Africa Relations

Sino-Africa or China-Africa relation is the relationship that exists between the African Continent and the People's Republic of China. It is the agreement and cooperation that is meant to foster a comprehensive developmental agreement between the continent through the instrumentality of the African Union and China. It entails the agenda that enables Africa pursue multilateral engagement with China covering areas of trade,

investment, infrastructural development, person-person exchange and other areas of mutual benefit and concern (FOCAC, 2000; Aiping & Zhan, 2018). China-Africa relations got off to a slow start after the first Asia-Africa Conference, the Bandung Conference, in 1955, as Beijing attempted to assert its leadership over the Third World and the nonaligned movement (Alden, Large and Soares, 2008).

The PRC began to pursue aggrieve and transcontinental market socialism during the 1970's under the direction and leadership of Deng Xiaoping (Yahuda & Yahuda, 1983; Garver, 2015). This leads the change to capitalism as the foundation of the country's socio-economic development, a process which commenced decades following the aftermath of the Great Leap Forward (GLP). Around 2011, China had the second largest GDP in the world, which stood at \$6.5 trillion, and the second largest GDP by purchasing power parity at \$11.1 trillion (Alden, 2007). Agu (1994) avers that although the history of China dates back 3000 years, its current participation in the modern international economic system only commenced with the emergence of the Chinese Communist Party in October, 1949, and the country's diplomatic engagement across the world has been conducted in the heat of America and Western opposition. China's task, however, has not been eased by the Sino-Soviet conflict.

On the whole, Chinese presence and engagement with the continent of Africa is basically a result of the diplomatic initiative of Chinese government and investors rather from the recipient African countries themselves. With increased presence of China across critical sectors in Africa, the terms of engagement between Africa and China have shown results of the latter's imprint when compared with the former (Hooijmaaijers, 2018). According to Large (2007), over the decades, Chinese engagement with Africa has gone through distinct phases, starting from the phase and periods of intense activities to periods of relative neglect. After the inauguration of PRC in October, 1949, the communist regime moved to restore China's historical international position through an increasing involvement with African countries which have effect on China's own internal political and economic posture. Chinese engagement with Africa was developed under the "three worlds" policy, ostensibly acting as the non-aligned 'champion' of the developing world". This was the first instance of China using Africa as a terrain for ideological competition.

According to Ogunsanwo (1974:1), Sino-African relations have largely resulted from the diplomatic initiatives and drive for establishing cooperative engagement with the outside world by the People's Republic of China rather than those of African nations. China has a long and storied relationship with Africa which has spanned centuries, in which the historical climax of relations was in the fifteenth century and the Ming dynasty, when

China was at the height of its shipping technology, which facilitated the first direct arrival of Chinese merchant and navy fleets to the continent's eastern shores (Alden and Alves, 2008).

According to Ubi & Ibonye (2017), since the establishment of contemporary diplomatic cooperation and relations between China and Africa, China's relationship with respective African country and the whole continent, has been viewed with great importance to the point that under successive Chinese government, series of principles and policies for the development of China-Africa relations have been developed and furthered by various aid programs.

The principle guiding China-Africa relations as enunciated by the late Premier and Foreign Minister of China, Zhou Enlai, during the tour of the continent in the 1960's formed the basis that has continuously guided Chinese foreign economic and technical relationship with Africa in particular and developing countries in general. According to Hofmann (2022), Zhou Enlai's position on the continent of Africa is basically contained in his famous speech detailing the core principles for economic aid and technical assistance in the continent. Specifically, it emphasizes mutual benefit, respect for sovereignty, and non-interference in internal affairs. These principles were designed to foster equality and cooperation between China and African nations.

The principle rested on the simple recognition of the fact that there was a general need for developing countries suffering from common history, and with similar intention to join hands and pull themselves out of the problems of poverty, collectively address international and national challenges. According to Zhou cited in Ubi & Ibonye (2017: Pg.44-45), "suffering from the same cause and struggling for the same aim, it is easier for China and other developing countries to understand each other". This position has further improved the underlying principles and policies of China's relation and cooperation with countries in the global South with the aim of engendering a Win-Win developmental framework.

Consequently, Reilly (2015) notes that, China's unique approach to external relations is premised on its self-identification as a developing country with unique developmental challenges, this explains Beijing's preference for South-South cooperation over traditional donor model deployed by Western powers in dealing with African countries. Chinese experts and officials hold the belief that Chinese developmental experience would provide valuable lessons and guide for other developing countries. On the contrary, the basis, approach and outcomes from Western aids to Africa is dependent on the roles of institution like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and various bilateral aid programs have driven Western aid, often with conditionalities tied to governance reforms,

democratization, and economic liberalization (Brown, 2005; Bader & Faust, 2014). Therefore, the obvious need for an improved Sino-Africa cooperation and engagement for economic development, trade and investment.

The primary objective of China's foreign policy is to safeguard national independence, state sovereignty and creating an international environment favourable for the advancement of its reforms and modernization efforts, as well as maintaining world peace and promoting shared common development through the principle of co-prosperity, win-win, non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations (Kejin, 2015). Also, the new guiding principles of Chinese foreign policy according to President Xi Jinping (2017), in his address to the 19th congress of CPC, includes the country playing a more active, innovative role in international affairs with new renewed global perspective. Therefore, the developing countries of the world according to him will be at the centre of China's foreign policy engagements. The developing countries and emerging powers are China's reliable friends and sincere partners (Kejin, 2015).

The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation and Africa's Development

FOCAC policy is distinctively addressed as the guiding principles and actions that drives the conduct of China-Africa cooperation with the aim of addressing the realist goals of the PRC and also addresses the developmental challenges confronting the African Continent (FOCAC, 2000; Anshan, 2012). The Forum, a tri-annual collective dialogue platform for co-operation between China and Africa, FOCAC is a signal of the dynamic and expanding nature of China-Africa relations. For example, through collaborative efforts with member states, the forum has had financed and built for Africa 6,200 kilometers of railways, 6,500 kilometers of road, 20 seaports, 20 bridges, over 80 power plants, more than 200 schools, and 80 plus stadiums and other forms of interventions (Aiping, 2018). Established for the first time in October 2000 in Beijing, constitutes a platform for African and Chinese policymakers to enhance China's relations with African countries (Anshan, 2012).

In the discourse of Sino-Africa relations as evident in the Country-Continent multilateral engagement or as in Sino-Nigeria bilateral cooperation and engagement all under the umbrella of FOCAC, the dawn of the millennium in 2000 was synonymous with this framework as it examined the imperative of an emerging PRC with the goal of establishing relationship with a viable continent as Africa (Van Staden, Alden, & Wu, 2018; Simonaviciute, 2020; Otumala, 2021). This forum gives breath and strength to Sino-Africa and Sino-Nigeria relations in the 'New Strategic Partnership' framework for development. Ubi (2012) notes within this position that, the whole imperative of FOCAC and the New Strategic Partnership is not only

to improve the exchange and cooperation between China and Africa in their various areas of engagement such as politics, trade, economics, social, culture and education, etc. it is also to give furtherance and formalize bilateral engagement, minimize the debate on China's interaction with Africa, and strengthen China-Africa cooperation in order to help address the growing challenges of globalization and promote common development between parties.

Importantly, the declaration between China and African continent from the inaugural meeting of the FOCAC-Ministerial Conference, held from 10-12 October, 2000, in Beijing China, where the ministers agreed thus:

We decide to vigorously promote further China-Africa co-operation in the economic, trade, financial, agricultural, medical care and public health, scientific and technological, cultural, educational, human resources development, transportation, environmental, tourism and other areas on the basis of the principles enshrined in this declaration and the program for China-Africa Co-operation in economic and social development adopted at the Forum so as to promote the common development of China and Africa (Beijing Declaration, 2000: Pg.1)

According to Van Staden, Alden, & Wu, (2018) FOCAC represents a major step aimed at defining multilateral relations and engagement between country and continent in the discourse of contemporary interaction and relations in the 20th century. Established as a holistic development framework between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the over 50 countries of Africa in 2000, FOCAC has for almost 2 decades of its existence set the frameworks and agendas for addressing the interest of the parties involved (Zeng & Zhan, 2018).

According to Shelton (2016), "the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was founded in the year 2000. The forum sets a good example for such South-South cooperation by a constructivist approach which posits that in today's changing global system, win-win outcomes can be best achieved and augmented through enhanced diplomatic dialogue and constructive multilateral interaction. Since its establishment, the FOCAC has offered China and Africa an institutional framework for seeking mutually beneficial outcomes and developing their strategic partnership".

According to Pingjian (2019), the FOCAC was incepted in 2000. The past 19 years have seen fruitful progress in China-Africa practical cooperation across the board. As a key platform for the collective dialogue and cooperation between China and Africa countries, the FOCAC has become a model of South-South cooperation and a banner of international cooperation with Africa. The benefits of China-Africa cooperation are abundantly clear. China has proved itself to be a reliable partner of Africa

by always walking the talk which is exemplified in the Chinese government construction of Africa Union secretariat for the continent.

The central focus of the FOCAC policy is to address multi-level objectives of China-Africa and fundamentally to address the longterm need of the African continent (Anshan, 2012; Large, 2021). Boin, Polman, Sommeling, & Doorn (2009) and Birdsall & Fukuyama (2011) noted that the development of a common China-Africa cooperation, through the FOCAC, to advance a “post-Washington consensus” provides Africa with numerous fonts for improved developmental opportunities and suggests a new agenda for both economic and political relations in our era of deepening globalization. In response to the new opportunities provided by China’s extraordinary economic achievements and its willingness to actively engage Africa as a development partner, Africa’s leadership has increasingly embraced China’s growing engagement and seeks to cooperatively develop realistic and achievable objectives for economic growth and prosperity (Dimwo, 2015).

The FOCAC policy is a form of “international diplomatic collaboration and cooperation” through which shared interests, aspirations and objectives of a collectivist are investigated, aggregated, strengthened and in the final analysis the machinery for actualizing same are put in place (Shelton, 2016). The establishment of the forum, its recorded progress and its expanding areas of need in the continent and China, the imperatives of deepening Chinese area of engagement with the continent has led to the establishment of sub-forms within the general framework of FOCAC. They are, the China-Africa people’s forum, China-Africa Young Leaders Forum, Ministerial Forum on China-Africa Health Cooperation, Forum on China-Africa Media Cooperation, China-Africa Poverty Reduction and Development Conference, FOCAC-Legal Forum, Forum on China-Africa Local Government Cooperation, and China-Africa Think Thank Forum.

Since its establishment in 2000, through FOCAC, China-Africa cooperation has held series of conferences in China and Africa, namely, FOCAC I in Beijing, China (2000); FOCAC II in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (2003); FOCAC III, Beijing, China (2006); FOCAC IV, Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt (2009); FOCAC V, Beijing, China (2012); FOCAC VI, South Africa (2015); FOCAC VI, Beijing, China (2018) and most recently the Extraordinary FOCAC Summit convened by the President Xi Jinping of China and via video conference from Beijing. These conferences have specifically focused on addressing the numerous areas of concerns for the Chinese government and the challenges confronting the African continent and on the sidelines of these conferences’ respective countries in Africa, have often negotiated agreement with the Chinese government (Anshan, 2012). Specifically, the much-celebrated Currency swap agreement between

Nigeria and China was signed in 2018; this agreement showed the countries readiness to deepen trade relations and other forms of engagement.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts the complex interdependence theory as developed by Keohane and Nye (1977) as a framework for interrogating Sino-Africa relations and FOCAC's response to Covid-19 pandemic. The theory lays significant emphasis the complex transnational connections between nations in the international system. It argues that the relations and cooperations between states weather economic, political, military or social have come to define new paradigm in contemporary international engagements. The theory was introduced as an interesting aspect of interrogating contemporary international relations and engagement between states with the declining resolve to war as instrument of state relations (Keohane & Nye, 1977).

The basis of interdependence between nations is such that actors leverage on structures of mutual interest and cooperation to achieve common interest and drive respective goals through established platforms that address complex issues. The theory brings to bear the subject of cooperation and all efforts deployed while addressing the effect of global pandemic and specifically, builds on the instrument of soft power and health diplomacy. This framework is particularly important in analyzing and understanding international relations during a global crisis, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and how global powers like China responds to same in its engagement with Africa through the multilateral instrument of FOCAC.

Research Methodology

The paper employs the secondary sources of data for its investigation and analysis. In this method data and information already in existence were sourced and subjected to comprehensive re-analysis and thematic analysis.

China's Response to Covid-19 in Africa: A Discourse

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in China has allowed the Chinese government allowed the country first-hand opportunity to adopt measures that helped keep first its growing economy on track and within the same agenda provide the much-needed leadership the country requires. During the period, the Chinese government undertook holistic actions such as localised containment within high-risk areas, rapid economic engagement which led to improved economic recovery from a contracted GDP of 6.8% in Q1 2020 to positive growth by Q2 2020 with a +3.2% growth within a year; provision of massive stimulus packages; improved infrastructure spending and tax relief for business; timely production and export of essential goods including medical supplies like masks, ventilators and

vaccines through 'Health Silk Road' initiatives to over 100 countries in the global South (Habibi & Zhu, 2021; Yuan, 2022; Fiore, 2024)

Given the country's first-hand experience and response to the pandemic, Chinese government within the framework of existing cooperative engagement with the continent of Africa and its countries have raised supports and assistance in form of training and capacity building for medical personnel from Africa, supply medical equipment such as face-mask, ventilators and debt relief to help cushion the effect of the lives and economy of the continent. Specifically, the Chinese, South African, Senegalese governments and other heads of states and government of Africa countries including Nigeria's President Buhari with the special presence of Moussa Faki Mahamat (the Chairperson of African Union), Antonio Guterres (the Secretary General of the United Nations) and Tedros Adhanom (the Director General of the World Health Organisation) convened the extra-ordinary summit held via video conferencing to support the continent in confronting the virus (FOCAC, 2020 Report; Otumala, 2021; Workneh, 2022). The Chinese government through FOCAC trained 400 medical personnel from African countries; developed handbook on Covid-19 prevention; renovated intensive care units; donate essential materials to local communities; and facilitated the LUBAN Conference which help train 11 African countries (FOCAC Report, 2020; Soulé, 2022).

According to Xi Jinping, in his speech at the FOCAC Extra-ordinary Summit which is focused on raising solidarity against the pandemic in Africa notes the urgent need for more efforts, mobilization of necessary resources, stick together in collaboration, to for members to do whatever it takes to ensure the protection of lives and active a minimal effect from the fallout of the pandemic on national economies. The problem caused by the outbreak of the pandemic was captured by the President Xi when he notes that "the sudden onslaught of COvid-19 has taken a heavy toll on countries around the world, with loss of several thousand precious lives... Covid-19 is still affecting many parts of the world. Both China and Africa face the formidable task of combating the virus while stabilizing the economy and protecting people's livelihood..."

The Chinese government since the outbreak of the virus has extended cooperation to the continent as the country has under take the continued the supplies of medical equipment, sending medical experts to train Africa's health workers, the quick construction of the Africa's Centre for Disease Control Headquarter and worked with Africa in delivering the health care initiative adopted at the FOCAC 2018 Beijing Summit. The President promised to speed up the construction of China-Africa Friendship Hospitals and the cooperation between paired-up Chinese and African hospitals. He also states that "together, we will build a China-Africa community of health

for all. We pledge that once the development and the deployment of Covid-19 vaccine is completed in China, African countries will be among the first to benefit.

The Chinese government also deployed medical personnel to Nigeria, Algeria, South Africa, Senegal, Kenya, the Middle East and the Persian Gulf and other regions some in preparation for the pandemic and mostly in response to the outbreak of the pandemic (Soulé, 2022; He, 2024). Specifically, a 13-member team was sent from China to Algeria alongside a relief flight carrying Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and other medical supplies such as the much-needed ventilators which was in short supply since the outbreak and spread of the Virus (Olander, 2020). This effort was complemented by the donation of medical equipment to African countries by the philanthropist Jack Ma, outside the government-to-government response. Also in Algeria, the Chinese government also promised to construct and furnish a medical facility that will be dedicated specially for the treatment of an estimated 5000 Algerians and 4000 Chinese employed by a Chinese construction company in the country.

In Nigeria, the government announced the arrival of an 18-member Chinese medical team which included doctors, nurses and other medical advisers. The delegation was accompanied by PPE's, medical equipment and ventilators (Omeje, 2021; Engelberth, & Sági, 2021). However, the cost of the equipment was not underwritten by the central Chinese government but by Chinese state-owned companies that operates in the country, particularly the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC). In Zimbabwe for example, it was noted that Chinese businesses operating in the country donated medical equipment and \$500 thousand to refurbish the Wilkins Hospital, which was the country's primary Covid-19 treatment center (Chipaike, Nunoo, & Chingono, 2023).

Also, the Chinese government through its state-back enterprise in show of solidarity and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) gave the Federal Ministry of Health, medical equipment and consumables, PPE's, over 1 million medical masks for health workers, ventilators, and other items valued at over \$1,300,000 million. In response, the FMOH on behalf of the Nigerian government appreciated the efforts and concerns of China and notes that "the recognition of collaboration, knowledge sharing, and expert insight are critical in the fight against the Virus" this position, aligns with the core value and driving force for the establishment of FOCAC as a veritable platform for pursuing the development of China-Africa and Nigeria-China relations.

Within Chinese response to the outbreak of Covid-19, the need to strengthen the existing the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was discussed. These agreements between

China and Africa amongst other things was meant to accelerate the follow-up and take away from the 2018 Beijing Summit with emphasis on cooperation on issues of public health, reopening and positioning of Africa's economy and the livelihood of the people whose means of living has been adversely affected by the pandemic.

Importantly, at the extraordinary summit, the President promised to leverage on the existing framework of FOCAC drive the cancelation of the debts of some African countries by providing interest free government loans with maturity date of 2020 (Yamulamba, 2021; Moyo, 2021). Also, for countries with heavy financial crisis, partnership with global community for greater supports such as extending the period of debt suspension was muted. The government of China further encouraged Chinese financial institutions to adopt the G20's Debt Suspension Initiative (DSSI). Furthermore, the Chinese government promised to uphold the basis of multilateralism which is the basis of FOCAC. That "in the face of Covid-19, solidarity and cooperation with Africa is the most potent and powerful weapon to defeat the pandemic. China also promised to work with Africa to uphold the UN-centered global governance system and support actively support the WHO in making adequate contributions to the global COvid-19 response without recourse to politicization, stigmatization, racial discrimination as said in some quarters (when Covid was referred to as Chinese Virus) and racial discrimination (FOCAC 2021, Report).

Conclusion and Recommendation

The paper is focused on the general issues underlying China-Africa relations within the context of the FOCAC framework and health diplomacy. It noted significant improvement in the fortunes through multilateral engagement between states and continental actors with shared values and interest. Specifically, it addresses important issues and intervention delivered to the continent through forum's extraordinary summit that discussed the implication of the Covid-19 on Africa's health and livelihood and most importantly China's response in aiding Africa confronts the virus through medical equipment supplies, expert advice and economic stimulus packages such as debt relief, cancelation and forgiveness. The paper recommends that the continent of Africa should act above its current status of donor-receiving continent and strategically explore the many gains available in the various FOCAC discussions and internalize same for the development of the respective countries in the continent. This should be pursued through the development of regional frameworks to engage and negotiate collective actions that will address Africa's developmental needs within the framework of win-win relations. The FOCAC platform presents a veritable platform for deepening China-Africa relations across sectors,

therefore, African countries through its regional window of African Union should draw out a robust plan of action in agreement with heads of states and government for a holistic domestication of the gains that China possess in driving development in the health sector. The countries in Africa, has a fundamental and urgent responsibility of charting a holistic development engagement with China given its readiness with reference to undertaking the WHO challenges and pursue health sector repositioning across the continent.

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