

Cultural Differences, Economic Partnership and Its Implication for Diplomatic Effectiveness: A Study of Nigeria and China (2011-2024)

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Abstract:

This study explores how cultural differences between Nigeria and China have influenced diplomatic effectiveness from 2011-2024. Both countries have different cultural values that is shaped by religion or social structures and this affects diplomacy, communication and negotiation. This study also focuses on the key cultural dimensions and how they shape diplomatic relations and trade. This study also highlights the challenges such as: misunderstandings or misinterpretation due to the difference in culture or negotiation styles and this brings about trade imbalance. This study examines strategies like cultural exchange programs and training skills that helped bridge cultural gaps. this study adopts the Complex interdependence theory that was propounded by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye in 1977. Also, data was collected using qualitative method 7 interviewees were Interviewed while data was also collected from secondary sources. The result of this study reviews that cultural difference has a great impact on economic partnership and it has an implication for diplomatic effectiveness and this difference hinders cooperation due to the difference in communication style. This study concludes by emphasizing that policy makers, diplomats and business leaders should develop a more effective strategies to strengthen bilateral ties and promote a sustainable development between Nigeria and China. This study recommends trade imbalance should be addressed and both countries should invest in cultural exchange programs and creating a clear and transparent agreement that protects the interest of both countries.

Keywords:

Miscommunication, Negotiation, Effectiveness, Misinterpretation and Diplomacy

I. Introduction

Exploring the cultural differences between Nigeria and China unveils a fascinating tapestry woven from the rich historical and cultural backgrounds of these two nations. The beliefs and cultural values of Nigeria and China are shaped by a combination of historical, social, religious and philosophical influences. Nigeria is religiously diverse with Christianity and Islam being the two predominant religions (Pate, 2010; Onyejelem et al., 2025). This country has extended family structure and Nigeria emphasized on collective responsibility and respect for elders, authorities and traditional leaders. In Nigeria education is highly valued for personal advancement. This country has about 250 ethnic groups with it won unique customs and traditions which can influence social interaction. China also has respect for social authority, hierarchy and family. And it is religiously diverse with Taoist and Buddhist which contributes to the spiritual life of the Chinese and they also see education as a pathway to success. Each of the countries has their different cultures and languages which can also affect communication styles in negotiations, (Cicellin et al., 2019).

The diplomatic relationship between Nigeria and China has seen substantial growth from year 2011 to year 2024, it marked significant economic, political and cultural exchanges. The historical ties between Nigeria and China have paved the way for a dynamic exchange of ideas, customs and artistic expressions. Also, Cicilline et al (2019) mentioned that understanding these cultural variances is crucial to comprehending the dynamics interactions and outcomes. According to Geert Hofstede (1980) who is a renowned Dutch social psychologist and anthropologist, best known for his pioneering research on cross-cultural differences and how they influence behaviour in the work place and society. His work “culture’s consequences; international differences in work related values” (1980), introduces the frame work for understanding cultural dimensions that differentiate the societies, and these dimensions include; power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term vs. short-term orientation and indulgence vs. restraint. His research continues to be widely cited and applied in academic and practical settings. His work has had significant impact on the fields of cross-cultural communication and international business, providing a valuable tool for understanding cultural differences. According to Geert Hofstede (1980), the cultural dimensions he mentioned can lead to differing expectations and approaches to diplomacy.

However, there are some challenges, such as miscommunication due to differing cultural expectations. Chinese managers might view Nigerians workers’ method as less committed, leading to tensions that can hinder collaborations (Ogunbadejo & Oye, 1976). This cultural friction can obstruct the trust needed for effective diplomatic relations. To overcome these challenges, policy makers have adopted strategies like cultural exchange programs and training initiatives aimed at improving communication and understanding. According to Kwanashie (2015), he believed that these efforts can help build cultural gaps and foster mutual respect.

1.1 Conceptualizing Cultural Difference

When we talk about cultural differences, we’re referring to the unique customs and values and ways of life that set on one society apart from another. These differences play a huge role in shaping how countries interact with each other, from the way they communicate to the way they negotiate. Triandis (1995), he proposed that cultural differences can be examined through “cultural syndromes”, which include interrelated dimensions such as beliefs, attitudes, norms, roles and values. His work emphasized the individualism collectivism dimension, which is central to understanding cultural variations. Henrich (2010) noted that cultural differences often emerge from interaction between individuals and their social environment, including institutional and normative constraints. He also emphasized the need to move beyond individual-level analysis to understand group level cultural variations.

According to Hofstede (1984), culture is like a shared mindset that defines a group’s identity and sets it apart from others. And also, according to Robert Alan, “cultural differences should not separate us from each other”. In the basis of diplomacy, cultural differences can greatly impact how negotiations are conducted and how decisions are interpreted. For example, differences in cultural values between Nigeria and China can be seen in various ways, including on how they communicate, directly or indirectly which can influence everything to understand the outcome of diplomatic effort. This means that culture influences how people behave and perceive the world based on their experience.

In our globalized world, encountering diverse cultures is increasingly common, affecting our behaviour and communication (Aondover et al., 2025). Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede introduced five dimensions shaping cultural perspective; power distance, individualism

vs. collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation and masculinity vs. femininity. Each dimension plays a role on how we perceive the community. There are few tips on how to navigate cultural differences which includes:

Remain Neutral: Take an objectives approach towards other cultures. Wherever possible, be conscious of cultural stereotypes and biases and actively work on them. Although you may think you have these but everyone has an unconscious bias that is the associations we hold, outside our conscious awareness and control and it affects how we view others peoples' backgrounds and cultures.

Expose yourself to different cultures: Want to build stronger relationships with your team members from different cultures? Start by showing genuine interest in their background, ask them about their traditions and communication style and you can learn more by: watching videos, reading books or articles and also by asking them questions. By doing so you'll create a welcoming environment where everyone feels valued and respected. It is a simple way to bridge cultural gaps and feel more connected.

Learn from other cultures: Make the most of the different backgrounds and viewpoints in your team. Think about how the values and idea of your teammates can enhance your leadership style. This approach is not only to foster better understanding among team members but also boosts the team's ability to innovate and solve problems effectively.

These are few tips on how to navigate cultural differences and applying them can help reduce misunderstanding in communication and tradition (Vitalis et al., 2025).

Knowledge about one's environment is the result of mentally organizing it in categories, for example, Animals are categorized in species, mammals , reptiles etc... Survival in the forest may depend on the categorization of animals into classes like "dangerous" and "innocent" (Sokal, 1974), but on this case we would concentrate on the categorization of believes, tradition and culture, such category like; Nigerians are more aggressive than the Chinese people because of the different approach of communication because each country will misunderstand the other which can lead to conflict. The term stereotype is used in a non-disrespectful way to refer beliefs and characteristics to specific categories (Nelson et al., 1996). Cultural difference is thus not only embedded in individual cognition, but also in the basic structure of the society.

1.2 Conceptualizing Diplomatic Effectiveness

Diplomatic effectiveness refers to how well a country can achieve its foreign policy goals through strategic negotiation and influence. Henry Kissinger (1994) described diplomacy as "the art of restraining power" while also noting it can enhance a nations power on the global stage. For countries like Nigeria and China, effective diplomacy requires understanding each other's cultural perspectives to build trust and misunderstandings.

Cultural difference can also affect the diplomatic effectiveness or relation of some certain countries, Wilfried Bolewski (2008), like Nigeria and China in several ways like in the difference of communication style because Chinese use the "non-confrontational" communication style and Nigerians are very direct in their communication style which can lead to misinterpretations if not understood properly. Shared value can be strength in diplomatic relation that is if there's a strong connection between both countries. Language barrier is a huge challenge in Nigeria-China diplomatic relation and to enhance effectiveness both countries should prioritize cultural

intelligence to understand and respect each other's customs, communication style and values and help prevent misunderstandings (Chiedozie, 2024).

The historical ties between Nigeria and China have evolved significantly which has influenced their current diplomatic relation (Aondover et al., 2025). The concept of diplomatic effectiveness between Nigeria and China is the degree to which 2 countries have been able to achieve their foreign policy and their mutual interest through their bilateral relations. Nigeria and China have also maintained strong political ties since 1971, Ogunsanwo (2008), and also China has become one of Nigeria's largest trading partner and Chinese companies are involved in some various major projects in Nigeria, mostly infrastructure development, Odeh (2014). Both countries have also promoted cultural exchange to enhance mutual understanding. "China and Nigeria formally established diplomatic relation on February 10th, 1971 and China opened its embassy in Lagos on the 6th of April, 1971 while Nigeria reciprocated in October that year" (Nwachukwu, Lambert Chidi, PhD, 2009).

1.3 Conceptualizing Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication is the study and practice of communication across cultural context. It applies equally to domestic cultural differences. Edward Hall (1959) is considered as the founder of intercultural communication studies. He introduces the term in his book "the silent language" and developed the theory of proxemics, which examines how people use space in communication which is based on cultural norms. Intercultural communication is about how people from different cultural backgrounds interact (Aliyu et al., 2023). It emphasizes understanding and respecting cultural differences. Instead of just blending into one culture, it encourages mutual adaptation, where both cultures can coexist and influence each other. This approach also aims to help people become more aware and sensitive to other cultures.

Intercultural communication can be applied in everyday life through several practical strategies like learning basic phrases, adapt your behaviour, educate yourself, practice active listening and also reflect on experiences, James Neuliep (2010). To also enhance your intercultural communication, it is crucial to avoid using humor, because it may not be translated well and they can easily get offended, Young Yun Kim (1988), Don't neglect feedbacks, always seek feedbacks to confirm your understanding and also pay attention to body language and facial expressions because they are very significant and lastly tailor your language and formality so that you would be understood easily by your audience (Aondover & Akin-Odukoya, 2024).

A key practical goal for intercultural communication is to help make cross-cultural projects successful, Rosa (2018). This includes things like sharing knowledge, building long-term business relationships, and bringing about positive changes in community development projects.

Milton Bennett's (1986) concept of intercultural communication provides a thorough exploration of intercultural communication from a constructivist perspective. His book emphasizes on the importance of cultural differences and developing intercultural sensitivity. According to Milton he gave several key principles of intercultural communication through his developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS) which was first introduced in 1986 and it explains how individual move from ethnocentric views, where they see their own culture as superior, to ethno-relative perspective that embraces and understands cultural differences and it this model identified 6 stages of sensitivity which are, denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaption, and integration and each of them represents the different levels of awareness and interaction in culture.

Intercultural communication involves understanding, emotional agreement and respectful behaviour in response of cross-cultural situations (Aondover et al., 2022). DMIS also helps in navigating cultural differences during international change initiatives moving from ethnocentric to ethno-relative perspective and this can foster a more inclusive environment and effectiveness. Coaching can also help in developing intercultural skills which can help them transition through the DMIS stages by fostering understanding and empathy towards other cultures, (Bennett, 2017).

1.4 Developing Cultural Intelligence (CQ)

Cultural intelligence (CQ) is this ability to adapt and work well in different cultural settings. It allows individual to understand and navigate diverse environments effectively. According to Earley and Ang (2003) defined it as “an individual’s capability to function and manage effectively in cultural diverse settings” in his book cultural intelligence: individual interactions across cultures. in this book they explore the fundamental nature of cultural intelligence and its relationship to other frame works of intelligence. Cultural intelligence (CQ) has multidimensional construct that includes 4 factors which are:

- i. Metacognitive CQ: One’s ability to acquire and understand cultural knowledge.
- ii. Cognitive CQ: One’s knowledge about cultures and cultural difference.
- iii. Motivational CQ: One’s capability to direct and sustain effort toward functioning in intercultural situations.
- iv. Behavioural CQ: One’s capacity for behavioural flexibility in cross-cultural interactions

Thomas and Inkson (2004) defined CQ as “a multifaceted competency consisting of cultural knowledge, the practice of mindfulness, and the repertoire of behavioural skills“. This definition was found paraphrased in three other articles. They also later advanced a similar yet more descriptive definition of CQ, that is “being skilled and flexible about understanding a culture, learning increasingly more about it, and gradually shaping one’s thinking to be more sympathetic to the culture and one’s behaviour to be more fine-tuned and appropriate when interacting with others from the culture” (Maikaba & Msughter, 2019). This was quoted in one further study. Khodadady and Ghahari (2012), explained CQ as “the ability to interact effectively in multiple cultures”. Peterson (2004) explained it as “the ability to engage in a set of behaviours that uses skill (i.e. language or interpersonal skills) and qualities (e.g. tolerance for ambiguity, flexibility) that are tuned appropriately to the culture-based values and attitudes of the people with whom one interacts”. This view of CQ was quoted by Crowne (2009) and paraphrased in two of the included articles.

Cultural intelligence (CQ) can also help in enhancing effectiveness between Nigeria and China in several ways. It can improve communication skills that can help diplomats negotiate effectively without misunderstanding which can strengthen relationships between both countries for long term partnership and in this process, this can promote peaceful negotiation and cooperation (Runsewe, 2022). Cultural understanding can foster a peaceful economic partnership, Saaida (2023), as seen in China’s investment in Nigeria which has also benefited both nations through infrastructure development. Cultural intelligent leaders reduce conflict by creating a solution by considering diverse viewpoints which fosters decision-making processes and this can help build trust by allowing members to feel valued and understood.

According to Livermore (2011), to require everyone to practice cultural intelligence, there are steps that can encourage people to value cultural intelligence;

Accept everyone’s unique opinions: Using cultural intelligence to notice and understand a colleague helps you to connect with them better. People with high cultural intelligence are open

to different ideas, opinions and advice from others with various strengths. If you're unsure about someone's behaviour or language, it's best to be open and honest about your confusion. This would help you know more about cultural differences.

Strive to learn more: Just as you learn skills such as stress management and emotional intelligence at work, it is also important to improve your cultural intelligence. You can also do this by taking a cultural intelligence test, that is interacting with different people and also observing their behaviours.

Conflict can happen in any team, but cultural intelligence helps identify the causes of disagreement and find solutions (Sternberg, 2021; Yar'Adua et al., 2023). Team members should remember practices that can reduce conflicts from cultural differences. Additionally, taking culturally responsive training, courses can help prevent conflicts before they occur. Gaining cultural intelligence adds a competitive edge to your business by improving communication, cooperation, teamwork and overall effective performance (Mojaye & Aondover, 2022). An adaptive culturally intelligent leader can notice the differences and make them not to result in disharmony or conflict. (The EW Group, 2025).

1.5 Conceptualizing Diplomacy

Diplomacy means managing the relationship between countries through negotiation to achieve a shared goals and understanding. Nicolson (1939) describes it as “the art of negotiation in an atmosphere of respect and tact”. Effective diplomacy requires balancing a nation's interests with the need of positive relationship. In the context of Nigeria and China, their diplomatic interactions are shaped by historical connections and cultural context leading to mutual benefits in trade and investments.

According to Akinterinwa (2016), he discussed about the implications of Nigeria-China relations for Nigeria's policy. It emphasized on the strategic partnership formed since their diplomatic ties began in 1971. China has invested heavily in Nigeria; the relationship is viewed as beneficial for China. The study highlights the need for Nigeria to align its foreign policy with national interests to maximize gains from its partnership.

Nigeria and China, two prominent players in their respective fields, have established strong bilateral ties over time, Olabisi (2017). This relationship is based on shared economic interest and diplomatic collaborations, with both nations benefitting from trade deals and cultural exchange. Nigeria benefits from its connection with China through the availability of various Chinese products in Nigeria markets such as textiles, electronics, pharmaceuticals, and kitchen utensils. According to the fitch solutions (2025) the China civil engineering construction corporation (CCECC) the Chinese company is also responsible for the contentious rail restoration project in Nigeria. However, diplomatic and political connections between the two countries have become stronger, reflecting joints interests and aspirations on a global scale.

Further-more, an agreement between two countries is called “bilateral” and that was the relationship agreement between Nigeria and China that expanded on growing bilateral trade and strategic cooperation. The diplomatic relation between Nigeria and China provides a critical analysis of the diplomatic relation between the two countries with respect to socio-economic and political development so that the diplomatic ties between the two countries would produce a win-win outcome. The diplomatic ties between Nigeria and China specifically focus on cooperation arrangements, technical assistance, scientific cooperation, economic cooperation and cultural cooperation (Sheriff, 2024). In conclusion, recognizing and integrating cultural

differences is essential for enhancing diplomatic effectiveness, as it fosters better communication, understanding, and collaboration between nations like Nigeria and China, ultimately leading to shared goals and mutual benefits.

1.6 Economic Diplomacy

Economic diplomacy is a strategic approach that utilizes a nation's economic resources to achieve foreign policy objectives and enhance similar interest. Rana (2007) defined economic diplomacy as the process through which countries tackle the outside world to maximize their national gain in all fields of activity. In broad sense, economic diplomacy can be defined as any diplomatic activity that promotes the state's economic interest. Economic diplomacy is about export promotion and inward investment; this is sometimes called "commercial diplomacy". Scholars like Kishan Rana (2007) emphasized on the importance of maximizing national gains through strategic economic interactions and that importance are;

Maximizing National Gain: Economic diplomacy is fundamentally about countries engaging with the global economy to maximize their national interests in trade, investments and beneficial exchange.

Multilevel dimensions: Rana identifies that economic diplomacy operates at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels, each contributing to a country's strategic economic objectives.

According to Kishan Rana (2007), there are three elements of economic diplomacy which are;

Salesmanship: This involves promoting a country economic. interests abroad, focusing on trade expansion and attracting foreign investment.

Networking and Advocacy: This element emphasizes building relationships and alliances with various stakeholders, including businesses and government, to support economic objectives.

Regulatory Management: This pertains to the negotiation and management of regulations that affect trade and investment, ensuring favourable conditions for economic engagement.

Economic diplomacy between Nigeria and China has evolved significantly, characterized by strong trade relations and strategic cooperation. China has become one of Nigeria's largest trading partners, with bilateral trade reaching approximately \$22.6 billion, primarily driven by Nigeria's oil export and China's manufactured goods (Chikaodili, 2019)

Economic diplomacy is essential in a globalized world, facilitating trade and investment while fostering international cooperation, Maria Ewa (2015). A strategic approach to economic diplomacy can help nations achieve their objectives and contribute to global stability and prosperity. The current vice president of Nigeria Kashim Shettima says that the trade between Nigeria and China grew to \$22.6 billion in 2023 "one of the highest in Africa". Economic diplomacy employs various strategies to achieve national interests through economic means and some of these strategies are.

Commercial Diplomacy: This involves engaging in trade negotiations and fostering relationships to promote exports and attract foreign investments. It leverages political influence to enhance market functioning and address cross-border transaction risks

Engagement With International Organizations: Working through global institutions helps create a favorable political climate for economic activities and sets international norms that facilitates trade.

Public-Private Partnership: Collaborating with private sector entities enhances trade and investments opportunities, facilitates knowledge sharing and addresses market failure. These strategies collectively enable countries to navigate global economic landscapes while advancing their diplomatic goals.

1.7 Cultural Differences and Their Impact in Diplomatic Trade Relations

This examines how divergent cultural values and norms are and the difference in communication styles between Nigeria and China. Scholars like Hofstede (1980), emphasized on cultural dimensions, which can shape economic partnership. Dependency theorist like Wallerstein (1974), critique Nigeria's reliance on Chinese imports (80% of bilateral trade) as a form of Neocolonialism where cultural asymmetries perpetuate economic dependency. Nigeria's lack of industrial capacity to negotiate equitable terms reflects to historical power imbalances (Yar'Adua et al., 2023). They also argue that China's dominance in infrastructural project like, e.g, the Abuja-Kaduna railway, shows how unequal power dynamics is. Nigeria's high context communication clashes with China's low context approach, Hall (1976), this had led to misunderstanding in several ways. In trade diplomacy, understanding cultural values is crucial. For instance, cultures that emphasizes individualism, such as the United States or Germany, tend to prioritize contractual clarity and negotiation tactics. Chinese empathies on trust and face-saving can be misinterpreted as vagueness by Nigerians (Fang, 2006).

Gerrt Hodstedes cultural dimensions theory helps explain such variations by identifying key cultural traits. For instance, China uses of Confucius institute and cultural exchanges has helped soften diplomatic tensions with trading partners while deepening mutual understanding, Fatima & Sani (2024). This mismatch in pace and style can lead to frustrations on both sides, according to Fatokun (2024), some Nigerian negotiators have perceived Chinese partners as secretive or inflexible, while Chinese officials sometimes interpreted Nigerian directness as disrespect for protocol or lack of discipline. Trust building also plays a crucial role, in Chinese business culture, trust (also known as XINYONG) is gradually built through long term interactions and mutual obligations (Wang & Jiang, 2023).

Overall, the diplomatic trade relationship between Nigeria and China is shaped not just by market forces but also by cultural dynamics from enhance efficiency, both countries should invest in cultural intelligence, including training diplomats and trade negotiators to understand each other's norms.

1.8 Cross-Cultural Communication Programs and Effectiveness

This theme evaluates how bilateral initiatives improves understanding between Nigeria and China such as language training, educational exchanges etc. Gudyknust (2005) also stated that programs like the Confucius institutes reduces conflict and misinterpretation and brings about harmony and respect. Nigerian students may learn a foreign language but lack exposure to China political economy. Even with the effectiveness of such program, there are economic disparities which hinders collaboration, Huntington (1993). However, their focus on language and cultural exchange often overlooks power imbalances such as China dominance in resource allocation. Gudyknust work underscores the limitations of top-down initiatives, while Huntington's clash thesis warns of boarder risk. Cross cultural communication programs have become increasingly important in the diplomatic trade relationship between Nigeria and China, both countries have recognized the need to manage cultural differences more effectively. These institutions offer mandarin classes, cultural festivals and exchange opportunities for Nigerian students (Zhang & Okonkwo, 2023).

These programs enhance communication styles not just in public level but also in business and government sectors. Chinese firms such as Huawei and Sinohydro have introduced cultural orientation workshop to help their expatriates adapt to Nigerian social expectations for more open conversational styles, because the perception of “one way” conversation would lead to frustration, Adewuyi & Ogege (2023). A more balanced approach would enhance programs outcomes. Despite this effectiveness, it is only evident in educational and diplomatic circles, many challenges persist at grassroots and commercial levels (Fatokun, 2024).

1.9 Challenges of Cultural Misunderstandings in Co-operation

This critiques how misaligned expectations for economic incentives create tension. Fukuyama's, (1995), states or argues that trust deficit hinders economic success. Nigerian traders often view Chinese practices as exploitative while Chinese investors struggle with Nigeria's bureaucratic corruption. Nigeria's over reliance on Chinese infrastructure loans trap in a cycle of debt causing cultural tensions. Huntington (1993) thesis highlighted on how cultural misunderstandings can escalate into geopolitical tensions which can strain diplomatic ties and these challenges highlight the needs for stronger cultural diplomacy. Addressing this trust deficit, transparent communication and adherence to contractual terms are critical to mitigating cultural clashes.

Regular dialogues and joint committees could resolve grievances promptly, reducing tensions over projects like railway or dams. These mismatches in communication have often caused breakdowns in negotiations and project planning, for instance, during the early phases of the Abuja and Kaduna railway project (commissioned in 2016), delays were partially attributed to differing expectations around project transparency. Similar tension arose also in oil sector seals, where the pace and process of decision making diverged sharply due to cultural expectations about how authority and responsibility are distributed (Nawaz, 2025). Lagos-Ibadan rail line faced criticism for delays, with Nigerian officials pressing for faster delivery while Chinese counterparts emphasized on procedural caution (WTO, 2024).

In summary, from 2011-2024, cultural misunderstanding is seen as an hinderance to cooperation between Nigeria and China which affects negotiations and they are caused by differences in communication styles and approaches. Both countries should invest more in cultural intelligence for more effective diplomat negotiations between Nigeria and China to resolve misunderstandings and for efficiency to work faster without any challenges.

1.10 Gap in Literature

Obikaeze (2023) discussed the evolving dynamics of Nigeria and China relations, emphasizing the need for a re-evaluation of strategies to ensure mutual benefits rather than a one-sided advantage from China. Akyuz and Inim (2020) argued that Nigeria's trade relationship with China has not yielded significant benefits for Nigeria, emphasizing the limited exports and the structural challenges within Nigeria's manufacturing sector with China.

With the above literature by scholars, the gap in literature that was not adequately identified which this research will fill is examining the long-term effect of Nigeria's trade imbalance. For instance, when Nigeria imports more than its exports, it becomes dependent on foreign goods and this can weaken Nigeria's control over its own economy, making it harder for local businesses to compete with imported goods. This trade imbalance has created unfair competition for local manufacturers, who may struggle against cheaper imported goods and would lead to lower production levels and job losses in local industries. To address the trade deficit, Nigerian policymakers might focus on strategies to encourage local production and

reduce imports. However, if they do not provide enough support like improving technology and infrastructure, these strategies may not work effectively. Overall, Nigeria's ongoing trade imbalance has brought about challenges for its economic independence and economic stability and to address this is, providing comprehensive strategy that would focus on strengthening local production and reduce dependency on imports.

II. Review of Literatures

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study will adopt the use of complex interdependence theory. This theory was propounded by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye in 1977. They introduced this theory in their influential book titled "Power and Interdependence" which was published in 1977. Their theory critiques traditional realist perspectives in the international relations by emphasizing on the importance of economic ties between state and non-state actors and how it shapes global politics.

This theory assumes that multiple channels connect the societies beyond formal state-to-state interactions (Higher, 2025). This theory assumes that economic, environmental and social issues are equally significant. In the case of Nigeria and China relations, this assumption is evident in their focus on economic partnership through trade and infrastructure development rather than military alliance (Rana, 2015). For instance, Nigerian's reliance on Chinese investments for infrastructure projects can create vulnerabilities due to asymmetries in dependence, allowing China to leverage its economic position for influence (Gartzke, 2010).

To apply this theory, we need to evaluate the impact of cultural differences, considering how cultural differences affect diplomatic effectiveness within this interdependent framework. Look for instances where cultural misunderstandings may have affected negotiations or collaborative projects, and cultural diplomacy can play a significant role in mitigating challenges in the economic partnership between Nigeria and China by fostering mutual understanding. Investigating the role of non-state actors is another important aspect. Multinational corporations and NGOs significantly influence the dynamics of the Nigeria-China relationship. It is also essential to analyse the multifaceted interactions between the two countries. This involves examining various channels of engagement, including trade agreement, cultural exchanges and diplomatic effort. Overall, this analysis underscores opportunities and challenges in navigating this significant bilateral relationship between Nigeria and China.

III. Research Methods

This study adopted a qualitative research design using primary and Secondary method as source of data collection. The primary source was gathered from physical interviews where 7 people were interviewed and their responses were noted in the findings of the study. Other secondary data were gotten from books, journals and articles and the internet. What challenges do these cultural differences create for cooperation in development projects? This difference brings about confusion and mistrust, Ogunsanwo (2008) explains that language and body language differences can create tension when they interact. These differences is clear in workplaces, where Chinese companies expect strict authority and clear decision making, but Nigeria prefer more equal and flexible ways. Alden and large (2011) said that because they don't share the same cultural ideas, conflict happen. Sometimes Chinese companies try to use ways that Nigeria may find strange and unacceptable.

Osondu-oti (2016) notes that Nigerians sometimes see Chinese firms as strict and not respecting local customs, especially how they treat workers and manage staff. Respondents' responses to this question are that the main challenge stems from misunderstandings as well as differences in language and misinterpretation which affects or has an impact in their cooperation for effectiveness. However, 2 out of 6 respondents mentioned that the way some Chinese companies treat some Nigerians is very unbecoming, most of them don't respect labour laws and this is every disrespectful to our country. A real-life example of cultural misunderstanding that affected Nigeria and China relations occurred during the conflict between Chinese management and Nigeria workers at the ZTE (Zhongxing telecommunication Equipment) cooperation Nigeria office in 2009. Osondu-out (2009) explains that this incident revealed a critical cultural gap, Chinese Managers expected silent compliance in line with Confucian work ethics, while Nigerian workers expected Dialogue, inclusion and mutual respect as it is common in their socio-cultural context. Respondents' Responses gave a specific instance where the Chinese mistreated Nigerians due to misunderstandings and this has caused conflicts and hindered cooperation.

How have these cultural differences influenced the effectiveness of diplomatic negotiations between Nigeria and China? As Uche (2010) notes Chinese insistence on hierarchical and long-term relationships building often clashes with Nigerian entrepreneurs' preference for transactional efficiency and assertive communication leading to misunderstandings during negotiations. Uche (2010), also notes that simple gestures like ignoring local greetings or failing to observe religious customs have been interpreted by Nigerian counterparts as a sign of disrespect with also create part to misunderstandings and misinterpretation. Okereke (2021) highlights that these perceptions are rooted in everyday interactions where cultural missteps such as ignoring traditional protocols or avoiding community consultations signals lack of mutual respect. Okonkwo (2020) explains that misinterpretation of trade terms and regulatory compliance issues are frequent where language support and cultural interpretations are lacking. Respondents' responses stated that Nigeria and China are countries with intricate and different cultures and that the relationship between Nigeria and China favours China more. Cultural differences play a pivotal role in shaping the diplomatic landscape in Nigeria China trade relations, influencing everything from negotiations dynamics to public trust and regular diplomacy.

Oghuvbu (2022) observes that this disparity heightens diplomatic friction, particularly when sensitive trade agreements are present under different cultural negotiations norms. Obikaeze (2023) emphasizes that the failure of Chinese negotiators to engage with Nigeria's informal power brokers, traditional leaders, unions and civil society makes 'Tracie's seem one sided and fragile. Bridging these differences is essential not just for trade success but for diplomatic resilience and good will. Cultural interpretations of equity and fairness in trade have diplomatic consequences. Nigeria experiences significant trade deficits. Critical reviews like Yusuf & Collin's (2019) suggest such imbalance leads to diplomatic calls for renegotiation and more technology transfer. Respondents' responses agreed that cultural differences shape diplomatic landscape between Nigeria and China because of their difference in culture and way of life.

What strategies have policy makers use to improve communication between Nigeria and China? Nigerian journalist have also participated in the exchange training programs in China, which improves reporting accuracy and cultural sensitivity, Ojo (2022). These efforts have mitigated misunderstandings in workplace settings and improved cooperation in joint ventures, Umejei (2020). The rise of social media platforms like WhatsApp, YouTube has also enabled informal, everyday cross-cultural communication, particularly among younger generations,

Okoro (2023). Respondents' responses to this question provided insightful examples, illustrating how past improvements in communication have effectively contributed to bridging cultural gaps in various ways. The Confucius institutes in Nigeria universities (e.g., University of Lagos, Nnamdi Azikwe university) have promoted Chinese languages and cultural education. This has enhanced mutual understanding and reduced stereotypes between the two nations, Xinhua (2021). Government sponsored scholarships for Nigeria. Students to study in China have built cultural bridges through firsthand immersion and intercultural dialogue, wang & Adebayo (2020). These institutes also offer exchange programs, trains workshops and cultural festivals that foster deeper interpersonal connections, Li (2020). These platforms allow for the sharing of cultural content, language tips and social commentary, thus humanizing and normalizing differences. Respondents' responses to this question illustrated how these programs have made understanding another language easier for a better understanding. this was aptly captured by respondents 1, 5, 2, and 4.

Summary of Findings

This study findings reveal that the cultural difference between Nigeria and China has a significant impact or influence in diplomatic relations especially in trade and cooperation. The difference in communication style leads to misunderstandings and misinterpretation which brings about lack of trust. The trade relation between Nigeria and China tends to favor the Chinese more. However, cultural exchange programs or academic partnerships has helped reduce the cultural gaps between Nigeria and China. In spite of the improvements, there are still challenges and to reduce this, there should be a training for deeper intercultural understanding.

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Nigeria and China relationship from 2011-2024 reflects on a active partnership characterized by strong economic cooperation, cultural exchanges and strategic diplomatic ties. Chinas investment and trade have contributed to Nigerians infrastructure development and economic growth while cultural diplomacy has helped in bridging differences and fostering mutual understanding. Despite the challenges such as trade imbalances and concerns over economic dependence, the partnership remains very impactful for Nigeria's development ambitions. Continuing, maintaining diplomatic effectiveness would require balancing economic benefits with Nigeria's Sovereignty and promoting a deeper cultural and economic engagement to ensure a truly mutually beneficial alliance.

Based on the study on Cultural difference, economic partnership and its implication for diplomatic effectiveness: a study of Nigeria and China 2011 - 2024, The following recommendations are suggested, which are:

1. Efforts should be made to address the trade Imbalance between Nigeria and China, by encouraging policies that supports the Nigeria local manufacturers and exporters.
2. Both countries should invest in cultural exchange programs me diplomatic training to bridge cultural difference.
3. Creating clear and transparent agreements that can protect the interest of both parties, which will help manage economic cooperation more effectively.
4. Nigeria should focus on develop its technological and industrial capabilities, which will help to reduce over dependence in China.
5. Both nations should remain open in adapting their partnership strategies in response to ensuring long term sustainability

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