MUTUAL DEVELOPMENT OR RESOURCE EXTRACTION: AN EXAMINATION OF CHINESE INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS IN NIGERIA, 2018-2025

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MAY, 2026

ABSTRACT

The study examines whether the Chinese investment in infrastructure in Nigeria from 2018 to 2025 was geared towards mutual development or towards resource extraction. The research was conducted in two sectors (Construction and Mining). The research design of the study was qualitative exploratory and secondary data sources were used, such as government reports, scholarly publications and policy documents as well as official records. Documentary method and content analysis were used to analyze the data and Debt Trap Theory was used as the theoretical basis. The study revealed that the Chinese have been actively contributing towards achieving the infrastructure modernisation in Nigeria with some of the major infrastructure projects they are responsible for in Nigeria being the Lagos Deep Sea Port, the Abuja Light Rail, Kaduna-Kano Railway and the Lagos-Ibadan Railway. These projects served to further boost mobility, expand Nigeria-China trade connections, stimulate economic activities and generate employment and further reinforce economic cooperation between Nigeria and China. So, it was concluded that the construction industry was one of the industries that helped each other develop through the study period with the help of Chinese investment. The study, however, also showed that Chinese investments merely had an impact on some structural difficulties, such as the increasing reliance on foreign loans, trade imbalances, insufficient technology transfer and the continued need for Chinese technical skills. The favorable infrastructure conditions facilitated easier access to parts of the country that are rich in minerals and the mining and export of strategic minerals such as lithium, gold and iron ore. This enhanced investment and commercial activities sparked concerns on environmental degradation, poor regulatory environment, labour concerns and the export of raw products which do not have much value addition capacity in the country. The study reveals that Chinese investments in the infrastructure sector in Nigeria had a developmental as well as an extractive impact. The investments stimulated infrastructure expansion and economic modernization, but reinforced trends towards economic dependency and extraction of resources. The authors present a wide range of recommendations for improved loan contracts, enhanced local content policies, improved arrangements for technology transfer and improved regulatory regimes, to better ensure that the future partnerships of China and Nigeria will increase their contribution to sustainable national growth.

keywords: Chinese Infrastructure Investment, Mutual Development, Resource Extraction, Nigeria-China Relations, Debt Trap Theory, Infrastructure Development, Mining Sector, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

So, it is important to play out the bigger picture of the trajectory of Nigeria–China relationship from 2018-2025. The bilateral relationship between the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the People's Republic of China (PRC) has been one of the most effective partnership in Africa for lengthy years. On 10th February 1971 the Nigerian Government recognised the People's Republic of China (PRC) formally. Nigeria's military dictatorship (1970s-1998) led to the international isolation and condemnation of the country, which strengthened ties between the two nations.The international isolation and condemnation of Nigeria's military dictatorship (1970s-1998) fostered closer ties between the two nations. This is because Africa's demand for infrastructure and development financing has helped the growth of China's engagement in Africa, particularly when billed as being more developed in the early 21st century. Nigeria, the most populous and one of Africa's largest economies, was a key player in China's policy towards Africa.

The years 2018 to 2025, however, had their own distinct set of events, including enhanced cooperation, upgrading of strategic partnership status, major infrastructure deals, shifting trade patterns, and increased public debate on debt and sovereignty. This period runs parallel to China's general pivot towards the Global South, the expansion of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) into Africa, and Nigeria's own industrialization and modernization of its infrastructure initiatives (2024; 2025, China Ministry of Foreign Affairs [MFA]). The 21st century has thus started with strengthening South to South economic cooperation; the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) established in 2000 is an example of such co-operation.

The Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) is a forum that is aimed at collective exchange in order to promote collaboration and dialogue with China and its African partners (Mlambo, Kushamba, & Simawu, 2018, p. 82). The Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) forum in Beijing for 2018 is one of the big signs for the bilateral relationship. At that event, China reaffirmed its dedication its commitment to Africa through infrastructure, industrialization, human-capacity building and financial cooperation. For Nigeria, these commitments complemented the country's development agenda. The meeting at the summit in 2018 helped to rekindle expectations in the Nigeria–China relationship and laid the ground for further cooperation during the next few years. In April 2018, the central banks of Nigeria and China endorsed a currency-swap agreement to enhance financial cooperation and support trade in local currencies (MFA, 2024). It was a new financial tool that marked a change from project-based infrastructure contracts to more comprehensive economic cooperation.

Further evolution has taken place with the upgrade of Nigeria – China bilateral relations to "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" at September 2024 FOCAC Beijing Summit (MFA, 2024). This enhancement was not just a testament to the growing levels of collaboration, but also indicated a more profound alignment of strategic interests, including infrastructure connectivity, industrial development, the digital economy, the green transition, human resource exchange and established cooperation mechanisms (THISDAY LIVE, 2024). In the official statements, Nigeria is mentioned as an African partner to China and its aspiration to be a manufacturing and logistics hub in West Africa, a role it has played among other African countries (Guardian Nigeria, 2024; 2025).

Since 2018, Nigeria and China have continued to have high level Mutual diplomatic visits and set up institutionalized arrangement for Mutual cooperation between the two countries during 2018-2025. For instance, since the presidency of Bola Ahmed Tinubu in May 2023, the Chinese delegation led by Vice-Chairman Peng Qinghua and Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Nigeria, and Chinese and Nigerian officials including Vice President Kashim Shettima and Foreign Minister Yusuf Tuggar also visited China (MFA,2024). These exchanges strengthened political confidence, highlighted the strategic significance of Nigeria for China, and established cooperation with various sectors (MFA, 2024).

During the review period, economic relations between Nigeria and China significantly expanded. According to the official data, bilateral trade amounted to US$25.68 billion in 2021 which increased by 33.3 % from 2020, while Nigeria's exports to China grew to US$3.04 billion (MFA, 2024). According to the Guardian Nigeria (2024), trade was estimated at US$22.5 billion by 2023 while in preliminary estimate around US$21-22 billion by 2024 was estimated by THISDAY LIVE (2025). These statistics suggest expansion and some fluctuation, thus a large and dynamic trading relationship. Thus, China has become the largest market for Nigeria's imports and the country is one of China's key export destinations to Africa (MFA, 2024). In mid-2025, over US$20 billion in Capital pledge was reported in various industries including agriculture, automotive manufacturing, mining, steel production, and energy (Nairametrics, 2025). These pledges are more than just about infrastructure, more about industrial cooperation.

Amongst the most visible aspects of Nigeria–China cooperation is infrastructure. There is a significant involvement of Chinese contractors and lenders in the implementation of the big projects, such as the standard gauge railways, road corridors, light rail/metro schemes and port/energy linkages in Nigeria. The Nigeria – China partnership has, for instance, funded the Lagos – Ibadan Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) (opened June 2021); and rail linkages between Kaduna and Kano (construction and financing by Chinese institutions, Rail Journal 2021; Reuters 2025).

On May 2025, the Nigeria government gave the green light to approving a US$652 billion loan from the China Export–Import Bank for a road connecting Lekki Deep Sea Port and the Dangote Refinery complex (Reuters, 2025). During 2024–2025, it further strengthened its partnership with energy, including a nuclear energy pact that was signed on 3 September 2024, and renewables (AP News, 2024). There are also ICT/backbone infrastructure, free-trade zones (Lekki FTZ, Ogun-Guangdong FTZ) and industrial parks in Nigeria where Chinese firms are operating (MFA, 2025). These trends suggest a transition from individual infrastructure projects to interconnected industrial/investment ecosystems.

In addition to project finance, Nigeria and China have increased their financial ties. Changing the currency in April 2018 and its revitalization in 2024 testifies to the preparedness of China to back Nigeria's financial architecture (MFA, 2024). Meanwhile, Nigeria's debts to Chinese creditors have been increasing, raising questions of debt dependence and other issues such as terms and governance (Vanguard News, 2021). As of 31 March 2020, Nigeria's external debt comprised an estimated US$3.121 billion loans from China, representing approximately 11.28% of Nigeria's external debt, according to the Debt Management Office (DMO) of the country. Although this seems to be a reasonable figure, analysts point to the increasing financial presence of China in Nigeria as evidence of a wider global approach that is connected to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its ambition to improve its influence in the world through development finance. In 2025, US$254.76 million was awarded to the Kano–Kaduna rail project by the China Development Bank (CDB) (Reuters, 2025). Many loans come with low interest rates, but there are concerns of exposure, transparency and local value capture.

The platform of Nigeria's infrastructural cooperation with China was laid down by the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in the theme, Narrow Africa's infrastructure gap, focusing on development aid, concessional financing and technology transfer, FOCAC 2018. Nigeria has gained from the key projects in the fields of railway modernization and road expansion and power generation through its Subsequent action plans that brought together economic connectivity and national productivity (Akinola, 2021). The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) became a more comprehensive strategy for building connectivity and sustainable development in a global context as China's foreign policy Advanced (MFA, 2024). The BRI is also built on FOCAC's previous pledge with the integration of Nigeria's infrastructure development into a trans-continental network of infrastructure between Asia, Africa and Europe. Thus, Nigeria's formal engagement in the BRI in 2018 marks a shift in the strategy from bilateral relationships under FOCAC to a multilateral development mechanism focusing on large-scale infrastructure, industrialization and long-term economic integration (Ovigwe, 2023).

1.2Statement of problem

The Economic growth and development has been hindered by infrastructure deficit in Nigeria. There is a strong perception that China is the antidote for this deficit and our government's relationship with China is viewed as the solution to this deficit. But there has been growing concern about the true nature of this cooperation, given the increasing amount of Chinese loans and investments. The infrastructural deficit in Nigeria has always been recognised as one of the key constraints to sustainable development in Nigeria. The government of Nigeria, in turn, has sought to plug these infrastructure gaps through China, which is also a major ally and business partner.

While official narratives stress that the relationship is a win–win deal, the opacity of the conditions and terms of several Chinese loans gives rise to questions of economic solvency and national autonomy. Evidence of the increasing debt to china has been scanty, with the Debt Management Office (2024) revealing that this has contributed to the much-anticipated industrial transformation in Nigeria. Chinese projects are frequently implemented by Chinese companies with imported labour and materials, thus complicating the process of technology transfer and job creation in the host country (Umejei, 2020).

In these patterns, it seems the China-Nigeria relationship is tending towards being asymmetrical, with Nigeria relying on Chinese loans and expertise but not necessarily reaping structural change. Hence, the focus of this research is to extensively explore if the Chinese investments in Nigeria between 2018–2025 are being used for the purpose of their mutual development or a disguised resource extraction.

1.3Research Question

The study is based on these research questions:

- How has Chinese infrastructure investments in construction in Nigeria enhanced mutual development, 2018 – 2025?
- How have Chinese Infrastructure Investment in Nigeria's mining sector engendered resource extraction, 2018 - 2025?

1.2 Objective of the study

The overall goal of the study is to examine the effects of Chinese investments in Nigerian infrastructure (2018-2025) on the development pathway of the country. The specific goals are:

1. To determine how Chinese investments in construction has enhanced mutual development from 2018-2025
2. To examine how Chinese infrastructure investment in Nigeria mining sector has engendered` resource extraction 2018-2025.

1.3 Hypothesis

H0: The Chinese infrastructure investments in construction in Nigeria has not enhanced mutual development, 2018 – 2025?

H1: The Chinese Infrastructure Investment in Nigeria's mining sector engendered resource extraction, 2018 - 2025?

1.3 Significance of the study

Theoretically, the study is important because of its contribution to the academic understanding of the Nigeria – China partnership in the context of international political economy; while, in the policy arena, it is important because of its impact on policy development and implementation, and in the practical dimension, it is important due to its contribution to the practice of development. A viable option for infrastructural and economic transformation in Nigeria remains, while China has become one of the significant development partners with a high level of financial and technical engagement. It is important, as it offers a timely and critical analysis of the nature of such partnership, as either a development opportunity or an opportunity to extract resources and fall into dependency in a new global order. These significance are:

Academic Significance:

The academic contribution of this study is that it contributes to the body of literature on the topic of China-Africa Relations, with a particular focus on the experience of Nigeria from 2018 to 2025. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was a time of increased co-operation. Previous studies tend to be broad-brush strokes of the Africa-China partnership, but this study focuses on Nigeria for a more detailed analysis of the developmental results, the nature of investments made and the impact on sovereignty and autonomy. It also includes a discussion of the theoretic conflicts between Dependency Theory and South–South Cooperation Theory and how both theories relate to each other in understanding current power dynamics in global collaborations.

Policy Relevance:

The findings of this study will give Nigerian development planners and policy makers policy level direction. The assessment of costs and benefits of Chinese-funded infrastructure projects, which enables decision-maker to understand the positive and negative aspects of the current bilateral relations. This findings will inform negotiations in the future for better transparency, local involvement and technology transfer in foreign-backed projects. Furthermore, it offers relevant facts to inform policy making that will help protect the national interest of Nigeria while maximizing the developmental impact of Chinese loans and investments.

Practical Importance:

In practice, the study brings light to civil society organizations, scholars and the public in Nigeria on the real situation of Nigeria's developmental involvement in China. It is crucial to know if the relation favours inclusive development or perpetuates economic dependency that will hold governments and investors accountable. The study's findings could also help advocacy groups spread the word about good investment practices that can help meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 9 on building resilient infrastructure, fostering innovation and ensuring sustainable industrialization.

Theoretical Contribution:

Finally, the study enhances theoretical understanding by challenging the simplified narratives of either a benevolent partner or an exploitative actor in relation to China. It takes into account the complexity of Nigeria-China relations and puts it in the framework of changing global power dynamics and development cooperation redefined. It does this by fostering a more well-rounded and fact-based discussion about Africa's interaction with emerging powers.

Finally, the study is relevant since it integrates academic research with empirical research and policy relevance, which serve to produce a comprehensive understanding on the impact of Chinese infrastructure investments on Nigeria's developmental sovereignty and quest for sustainable growth.

The scope of this study was limited to only examining the green tax for air pollution.

This study is both contentwise and geographically limited to ensure focus, clarity and depth of study. Content scope of this study is those Chinese investments in construction which has enhanced mutual development from 2018~2025, this domain focuses on the nature, patterns and implications of Chinese investments in Nigerian infrastructure from 2018 to 2025 with greater emphasis on whether such investments have brought mutual development or merely resource extraction and dependency. Infrastructure is the focus of the research as it is the most noticeable and strategic sector of China's engagement in Nigeria, making up a large share of bilateral financial transactions, foreign direct investment (FDI) and development financing. The study will focus on three major sectors in the field of infrastructure:

Chinese funding has been used to build all the transportation infrastructure such as the Lagos-Ibadan Railway, the Abuja-Kaduna Railway and the Abuja-Kano Expressway, all of which have been given to Chinese companies, including China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC).

Projects involving energy and power generation such as the Zungeru Hydropower Project and transmission of energy funded by the Exim Bank of China.

Construction and industrial projects, including those of airport modernization and the creation of special economic or free trade zones such as the Lekki Free Trade Zone, which has many Chinese companies' stakes in it.

Geographically, this is a study that centers on the activities of the projects in selected states and cities of Nigeria as Lagos, Abuja and Niger State are representative of the core areas where China is most active in Nigeria's infrastructural activities, and which are the most visible in terms of the extent of China's engagement. The study is conducted across the time period 2018 – 2025. The period selected is due to the rising involvement of Nigeria in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the critical launch of some of its flagship infrastructure projects. Most of these projects are finished or at a very advanced stage by the end of the terminal year (2025), giving enough information to analyze outcome and implications. The data sources to be used include secondary data from official publications of the Debt Management Office (DMO) of the Federal Ministry of Finance, Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), reports by the Embassy of the People's

Republic of China, scholarly articles and credible online databases. Interviews or the opinions of experts might supplement documentary proof where possible, in order to provide a more comprehensive view.

There are some limitations to this study that could influence the findings of this study. The primary limitations are the lack of access to official documents and financial information; this study relied on secondary data sources because these researchers couldn't access the proprietary information of Chinese ministry of commerce and other Chinese institution. Lack of accurate and reliable data information from Nigeria authority on their interaction with Chinese state made the researcher to depend on the available information on the internet and from other sources. A number of agreements between the Nigerian government and Chinese institutions are kept confidential and details of the loan conditions and repayment mechanism are not available. The study, therefore, draws heavily from secondary sources of information from reliable sources like Debt Management Office (DMO), World Bank, and other scholarly publications.

Data reliability and transparency is yet another limitation since the official data provided by Nigeria and China may at times be inconsistent and biased due to political reasons. This issue is addressed by the researcher who ensures cross-verification of information obtained from various sources. The selected time frame of 2018-2025 serves as a limitation as well since the long-term consequences of Chinese investments such as the results of repayment of debts or technology transfers cannot yet be observed. Limited time and money may serve as limitations for fieldwork or conducting interviews among projects' participants. At last, just like any other qualitative research, the problem of researcher's bias may occur; however, it will be minimized with the help of objectivity and theories. Despite all the difficulties, the study is valid and reliable due to triangulation of data and critical analysis of information collected.

1.4 Operational definition of term

1.Mutual Development:

It is said to be a type of cooperation that benefits both Nigeria and China equally and sustainably in the mutual development of their economies, building of infrastructure and technology transfer. It focuses on the mutuality and equality of international relations (Alden & Large, 2019).

2. Resource Extraction:

Resource extraction is a method in which a foreign entity (in this case China) exploits the natural resources or economic infrastructure of another country, for its own industrial or strategic advantage, and may cause dependence (Carmody, 2016).

3. Infrastructure Investment:

This term explains the financial and technical contributions by China toward Nigeria's physical development such as roads, railways, power plants, and ports — financed mainly through loans or direct project funding (Brautigam, 2020).

4. Belt and Road Initiative (BRI):

The BRI is a China-led infrastructure and connectivity initiative aimed at fostering trade, investment, and cooperation among Asia, Africa and Europe countries since its launch in 2013 (Yu, 2018). In 2018, Nigeria officially became part of BRI framework to gain infrastructure financing from BRI.

5. Dependency Theory:

A theory of international relations that describes the interdependence of developing states with powerful ones, in which the trading and financial interdependence is characterized by inequality. For instance, most African countries reliance on European and Asian countries.

6. South–South Cooperation:

An initiative of developing countries for fostering the development of one another, knowledge sharing, solidarity and growth without the influence of Western countries (UNCTAD, 2018). This framework is used to describe Nigeria–China relations.

7. Bilateral Relations:

It involves formal diplomatic, economic, and political relations between two countries or states, such as Nigeria and China, characterized by treaties, agreements and shared interests (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nigeria, 2021).

8. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI):

An investment by Chinese companies into the productive sectors of Nigeria for long-term economic gains (OECD, 2020).

9. Economic Sovereignty:

Nigeria's capability to independently make and implement its economic policies without external interference or excessive foreign influence (Obi, 2020).

10. Debt Sustainability:

Nigeria's ability to maintain and repay its foreign debt and in particular the Chinese debt without compromising its fiscal stability and development goals (World Bank, 2021).

The work, therefore, examines the relationship between the two, namely, Mutual Development or Resource Extraction: an Examination of Chinese infrastructure investment in Nigeria (2018~2025).

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The objective of this chapter is to undertake a critical review of existing literature in relation to the research objectives and aims. This chapter has been structured based on the following sub-headings; conceptual review, thematic review, theoretical review, empirical review, and finally the gap in the literature. These sections progressively develop an analysis framework within which Chinese infrastructure investments in Nigeria between 2018 and 2025 will be analyzed using the lenses of mutual development and resource extraction.

2.1 Conceptual Review

The concept review interacts with the basic concepts used to frame the study. A comprehension of the definitions of resource extraction, mutual development, infrastructural investment, and foreign policy tools of China is needed in order to analyze the information presented in the following chapters.

2.1.1 Mutual Development

Developmental cooperation is a cooperative process of development between two or more States, the relationship between the two States is beneficial, in various aspects such as developmental, economic, political and strategic aspects. Additionally, mutual development is connected with partnership in shared development, cooperation in infrastructural development, expansion of trade and commerce, investments opportunities, science and technology transfer and economic development and modernization in international political economy (Mawdsley, 2019). Exploitative economic relations are driven by one side benefiting at the expense of the other, but mutual development takes the other side into consideration, and is oriented towards long-term cooperation and mutual benefit between the two countries.

When speaking of the China-Nigeria relationship, the Chinese investment in Nigeria's infrastructure to help the Nigerians implement the transformation of their infrastructure and economic situation often comes with the term “mutual development”. It is commonly said that China–Africa relations are a “win-win” one which is characterized by the concept of South–South cooperation, mutual respect for each other's domestic affairs and joint economic development.It is noted that the “win-win” nature of China–Africa relations can be described by the concept of South–South cooperation, mutual respect for domestic affairs of each other's countries and joint economic development (Sun, 2021). In this model, the Chinese investment in infrastructure is a way of benefiting Nigeria, the recipient, as they are given investment opportunities and markets while Nigeria is provided with investment and markets and China with influence.

The Chinese government/state is one of the largest sources and contributors of funds in Nigeria, both in the construction and transportation sectors, over the period of 2018-25. All the major projects discussed, such as the Abuja Light Rail project, Lagos-Ibadan railway, Kaduna-Kano railway and Lekki Deep Sea Port, were much in the spotlight as potential infrastructure partnerships to achieve mutual development. The Abuja Light Rail project was a huge investment in rolling stock and depot which amounted to approximately 157 million dollars and contributed to the transportation and mobility system in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) in 2018. In the same manner, the Lekki Deep Sea Port (LDP) project, valued at USD 629 million in 2019, boosted the capacity and commercial connectivity of maritime trade in Nigeria.

Proponents of Chinese investments have maintained that these projects play a huge role in economic development, job creation and infrastructural development in Nigeria (Okeke & Eme, 2022). Better transport systems cut transport costs and improve the efficiency of businesses, and enhance domestic and international trade activities. Other infrastructural projects have a positive impact on the economic activities as they provide employment, demand for local materials, engineering services and urban development. Apart from that, the amount of bilateral trade between Nigeria and China is also on the increase which shows the increased economic relations between the two countries. According to reports Nigeria – China bilateral trade volume was estimated to have grown to the tune of 22.3 billion dollars by 2025, a trade growth increase of almost 30 percent between 2018 and 2025.

There is also linkage between the capacity development and the technical cooperation and mutual development. The Chinese Construction projects in Nigeria introduced a number of engineering technologies and systems of railway engineering to the local engineers, technicians and workers. Local laborers were given opportunities to gain hands-on experience in different infrastructure projects, thus helping to develop local human resources. Its supporters therefore argue that these investments not only support the development of infrastructure, but also play a role in development objectives like region integration, industrialisation and urbanisation of China.

The process of regional economic and connectivity development is the other key aspect of mutual development. In Nigeria, the Chinese investment in the continuous railway and port projects boosted the flow of goods and persons and the business activities. Increased productivity via improved infrastructure, including faster transport services, increased market access and improved supply chains. These are not only for the development of the national economy but also for the regional integration in West Africa in general.

Despite all these benefits of the programme, however, some academics are not convinced of the developmental nature of the China-Nigeria relationship in the true sense of the word. While infrastructural paves the way for Nigeria, there are also concerns that often, China wins the jackpot of markets, contracts and longterm economic control (Carmody 2022). The trade imbalance, increasing debts and weak technology transfer are also issues of concern. It's often the case that locals don't participate that much and Chinese companies win the competition for project execution. That has led to a debate about the developmental impact of Chinese investments, and whether they are mostly geared towards the Chinese national interest.

But, defenders argue that Nigeria's infrastructure over the years has been filled to a very great extent by China's investments in these same infrastructures. There was a definite improvement in the Nigeria transportation and construction industry between 2018 and 2025 particularly in the provision of engineering services and funding. The positive stimulus of mutual development is best reflected in the development of railways, urban transport, ports and roads at the beginning of the study period.

2.1.2 Resource Extraction

Resource extraction or abstraction, the extraction of a natural resource for economic or industrial exploitation, such as minerals, crude oil, natural gas, timber and other raw materials from the environment. The concept has explored a lot in the international political economy field as a foreign state or multinational company comes to a developing state carrying valuable natural resources, which are then exported and used for industrial processing or commercializing purposes

(Bridge, 2020). However, the extraction of resources is particularly common in developing countries that have an abundance of resources but few capital, technologies and infrastructure to be able to extract and utilise on a large scale.

Traditionally, the term 'resource extraction' has been linked to colonialism, dependency and to the imbalanced economic relations between developed and developing countries in Africa. However, many African economies have been traditionally geared towards the production of raw materials for exportation to the industrial economies, and are very much dependent on imports of manufactured technology, goods and products. This kind of economic relationships are perceived as having a low level of contribution to local economy in terms of industrial/value added contribution and a high level of contribution to the outside of the country in terms of resource export to others (Taylor, 2019).

One of the most important components of the China–Nigeria relationship has been the extraction of resources, and in the case of the Chinese infrastructures in Nigeria, especially within the mining sector, from 2018 to 2025. Nigeria is blessed with large mineral resources like lithium, gold, iron ore, coal, tin, limestone and so on, that are in high demand in the world for industrial and technological production. The Chinese companies had again made Nigeria's mining and extractive industries their prime interests due to the Industrial development and the world's demand for its strategic minerals.

Roads and railroads, and port infrastructure built by Chinese investment indirectly had a positive effect on mining and extractive activities, by increasing access to numerous mineral-rich areas, and by facilitating the transportation of mined resources to export terminals and industrial centres. The upgrading of the railway and the widened road facilitated the transport of logs from the mines to the trade routes, and increased log extraction and export. Rather, there are robust critiques that many of these infrastructure projects are, not only for developmental ends, but also as part of a larger economic strategy linked to access to and control over resources and economic growth (Alden & large 2019).

One of the salient points that have been brought up by the extraction of resources is the continued export of raw materials without adequate processing in the country. Nigeria has a large sectoral trade deficit with China, primarily exporting primary products and raw materials, and importing manufactured products, machinery and industrial equipment from China. The outcome is a dependency, for the foreign economies the best and most lucrative way of operation is through industrial manufacturing, for the resource producing economies the export of commodities.

Resource extraction is also associated with environmental and social impacts. Some effects of mining in Nigeria are: Land degradation, Deforestation, Water pollution and destruction of local ecosystems in different parts of Nigeria. However, for certain communities, the illegal mining activities and inadequate environmental legislation and regulations have led to degradation of the environment and health issues (Aidoo, 2021). These issues may be exacerbated if foreign companies are allowed to participate in the extractive industries in low-enforcement and/or weak regulatory environments.

The other topic, which is very close to the extraction topic is that of “black” and “white” money or “leaky” economy. Others respond that this type of extractive industry can make money for other companies of the world and that they have less benefits for the country in the long term. Issues have also been expressed around transparency in the mining agreements, on the illegal export of minerals, tax avoidance, and on the respective compensation of local communities involved in the operation of mines.

There are also several critics who state that resource extraction can increase the economic dependence and external influence over strategic economic sectors. For mining, foreign investment, access to funds, machines and technical expertise are increasingly relevant as Nigeria relies more on them and they will be more influential in the formulation of their resource management policies. This is the same concern as dependency and neo-colonial arguments of developed and developing countries about the unestablished economic relationship.

Despite all these challenges, the advocates of Chinese mining investments in Nigeria's mining sector are optimistic that foreign investment in mining brings diversification of the economy, better infrastructure and enhance commerce. The Chinese investment has catalysed an upswing in exploration, and made a number of mineral resources more commercially viable that had only been slightly developed. Therefore, it is said that if well managed, resource utilization can enhance the economic development of Nigeria; through better regulation and governance, and with the adoption of improved local participation policies.

But, it is yet to be determined whether Chinese investment in Nigeria's mining industry is pretty much economic interest to Nigeria or to other economic interests. The extractive and non-extractive challenges of the environment, labour and illegal mining, as well as the uneven nature of the trade and external factors of the economic relationship between China and Nigeria, further complicated the debate on the extractive nature of the China-Nigeria economic relationship between 2018 and 2025.

2.1.3 Chinese Infrastructure Investment

Chinese infrastructure investment refers to the Chinese SOEs, policy banks and commercial banks provide the financing of tangible infrastructure (such as the railway, roads, ports and airports, power facilities, communication networks and other physical network infrastructure), build infrastructure, and, in some cases, operate infrastructure in other countries. Chinese infrastructure financing differs from western development financing, which is often offered by Chinese lenders and contractors in the form of a package of financing, engineering, procurement and construction (Parks et al., 2021).

Chinese infrastructure investment is one of its key characteristics in that it is funded on top of concessional loans and preferential loans, primarily from institutions such as the China Development Bank (CDB) and the Export-Import Bank of China (EIB). In contrast to other Western financial institutions, Chinese financing is generally not done under political strings attached to governance reform, democracy or human rights issues. This has fostered the special appeal of Chinese infrastructure financing for many developing countries that have high infrastructure needs and less expensive development financing options (Sun, 2021).

Another characteristic of the Chinese infrastructure investments is that they are the sole ones that can implement the project. Normally, Chinese companies offer engineering, construction, technical equipment and project management service as well as Chinese policy banks offer financial support. In the Chinese outbound infrastructure investments, financing and construction work go hand-in-hand. The authors of Parks et al. (2021) note that several of the Chinese loans include sovereign immunity, confidentiality and cross-default clauses, and have raised questions regarding transparency and debt sustainability issues in the borrowing country.

Chinese Investment in Nigeria in the Infrastructure Sector has been more relevant since 2018, particularly after the Nigerian government embarked on filling gap areas in the country's infrastructure development in the transportation, energy, construction and maritime sectors. On a large scale and scope, Chinese investments have been embraced in two major programmes, namely the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to which Nigeria officially joined in 2018 and the Forum on

China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) where a number of bilateral development (BIDA) agreements and infrastructure commitments have been negotiated.

The major area of Chinese investment in the Nigerian infrastructure was on the railways, urban transport, ports, airports and energy infrastructure. Abuja Light Rail project was one of the more prominent projects with about 157 million dollars invested in rolling stocks and depot in 2018. The project facilitated the mobility and transportation in the urban area of the FCT. Likewise, the Lekki Deep Sea Port project, whose cost in 2019 was about 629 million dollars, was one of the biggest port infrastructure projects in West Africa, and gave a boost to Nigeria's maritime trade capacity. The other big investment was the upgrade of the Lagos-Kano railway line comprising the Kaduna-Kano railway line which is approximately 203km and cost about 264.9 million dollars in 2023.

Chinese investment in Nigeria's infrastructure has positively impacted the country's transportation system, trade relations, and economic integration, as highlighted by Ajah & Onuoha (2025). Railway schemes opened up the main corridors of trade, facilitating the transport of people, goods and services, and making them more mobile, so lowering the cost of transport. Infrastructure creation also boosted the influx of commerce, jobs and the urbanisation of some regions of the country.

In addition, China's infrastructure projects helped to expand bilateral trade between Nigeria and China. By 2025, bilateral trade between the two countries is estimated to have reached nearly $22.3 billion, with the trading volume growing by nearly 30 percent every year from 2018 to 2025. It was not just commercial interaction that was responsible for this development, but the development of transportation systems, port facilities and logistics networks were also key factors.

Despite these development advantages, Chinese infrastructure investment has aroused a lot of criticism and controversies. The issue of sustainability of debt and Nigeria's reliance on Chinese loans for infrastructure development is one of the major concerns. This dependence on external funds may impose an economic burden on Nigeria, causing the country to be highly indebted and to lose its economic sovereignty (Gana et al., 2024). There have been concerns too regarding the clarity of Chinese loan agreements, and the ownership of major industries by foreigners.

The other criticism is in relation to the trade imbalance and technology transfer. Local involvement in the technical operations of the project and in project management can be restricted, but Chinese companies can dominate project financing and realization. It is discovered that the Chinese firms frequently rely on imported technology, engineering systems and machines, and these have limited possibilities of local industrialization and technological progress. But opponents argue that the Chinese investments, though they have an impact on development, may be the basis for dependency relationships.

But the proponents say the Chinese investments have played an important role in closing the infrastructure gap in Nigeria, especially in the private sector where the Western aid and commitments were not offered. There is an increasing importance of Chinese investments in Nigeria's economic development strategy as seen in the railway, urban transport, ports and construction projects from 2018 to 2025.

2.2 Thematic Review

The thematic review arranges the available literature on the journals according to the two themes that underlie the study: infrastructure investment in China as a means of mutual development, and infrastructure investment in China as a means of resource extraction, especially the mining industry.

2.2.1 Chinese Infrastructure Investments in Construction and Mutual Development in Nigeria (2018–2025)

Since 2018, Nigeria has seen a major push on the Chinese government's infrastructural projects, which has resulted in a large volume of scholarship material regarding the potential for Nigeria's development to benefit China.China has heavily invested in Nigeria's infrastructure between 2018 and 2025, resulting in a large pool of scholarship for the potential for mutual development. In the context of mutual development, both China and Nigeria benefit from cooperation in terms of economic, commercial, infrastructural and strategic development. Meanwhile, the Chinese people's investment in Africa's construction and transportation industry, which has helped modernize the African economy, has also been a driver of China-Nigeria relations, and increased the commercial influence and investment opportunities of the Chinese people in Africa, according to proponents.

One of the largest fields of exchange of development that Chinese investment encouraged was transportation. The railway modernization projects in Nigeria, funded by China, like the Abuja Light Rail, Lagos–Ibadan railway and Kaduna–Kano railway greatly enhanced transportation infrastructure in Nigeria. Total investment in 2018 in the rolling stock and depot works in Abuja Light Rail was approximately $157,000,000. The project's project was geared towards enhancing the efficiency of transportation in the Federal Capital Territory and to encourage urban mobility in Abuja. Likewise, the Lagos–Ibadan railway not only enhanced transportation of passengers and freight between Lagos and the major commercial centers in southwestern Nigeria but also decreased transportation expenses and travel time (Okeke & Eme, 2022).

The Lekki Deep Sea Port project was also a symbol of the Chinese–Nigeria cooperation in infrastructure development. The project has estimated cost of about 629 billion dollars in 2019, improved Nigeria's maritime trade capacity and provide improved commercial connectivity amongst West Africa. The port expanded Nigeria's capacity to accommodate higher volumes of cargo, and facilitated international trade. Backers believe that infrastructure development contributes to economic growth in the long term by logistics, investment and regional trade integration.

Furthermore, Chinese infrastructure investment also led to capacity development and job creation in Nigeria. Modernisation of railways, road expansion, development of the airport and the construction of ports created jobs for the engineers, technicians, artisans, transport operators and support services both directly and indirectly. Technical exposure has been gained by some professionals in Nigeria through partnerships with Chinese construction firms, such as in the construction of railway lines and urban transportation networks (Egbula & Zheng, 2022).

Another significant area of bilateral relations between Nigeria and China was the growth of bilateral trade between them. Easier movement of goods and better commercial interaction between both countries was strengthened by improved transportation infrastructure. According to reports, bilateral trade has grown to about $22.3 billion in 2025 as compared to $17.2 billion in 2018, representing an almost 30 percent growth in trade between Nigeria and China. The support for the raised trade is related to the economic benefits derived from the cooperation in infrastructure and to the economic integration.

Besides, the Chinese investments helped in the modernization of the city and infrastructural development in Nigeria. The modernization of the airport and construction of roads and urban transport systems improved the region's mobility and connectivity. Better infrastructure has helped to boost productivity and business efficiency, as it has lessened delays due to poor transportation and logistics systems.

But critics have noted that to date the concept of mutual development of China-Nigeria relations has yet to be fully realised. A big problem with this criticism is that of trade imbalance. While bilateral trade grew considerably, Nigeria had the bulk of its exports to China comprising raw materials and crude oil, and the bulk of its imports comprising manufactured goods, machines and industrial items from China. Critics argue that this unequal trading system benefits China instead of Nigeria, since it provides China access to the resources, and Nigeria access to the markets, while Nigeria is stuck with China's industrial products (Carmody, 2022).

Other issues include issues of technology transfer and participation of the local community. Chinese firms normally provide project financing, technical operation and construction management, with the use of import machinery and foreign expertise being extensively used. Therefore, critics say, the projects are inadequate to improve the nation's industrial and technological capacity. In a number of instances, local entrepreneurs and industries involve themselves in large scale infrastructure projects in a secondary role, reducing the chances of indigenous industrial development.

The concern over debt sustainability also came to the fore in the context of Chinese infrastructure investments. China's infrastructure-related lending to Nigeria grew in size from 2018 to 2025.Chinese financing of infrastructure projects for Nigeria (large-scale) increased from 2018 to 2025. This lending would enable rapid infrastructure development but also resulted in long-term debt and fiscal vulnerability, and dependence on outside financing. Some experts say Nigeria's over dependence on China may be a problem to its economic sovereignty and influence on the economic policy decision of Nigeria.

But the proponents argue that much of the neglect of Nigeria's infrastructure is due to lack of investment from other western countries, particularly China. The improvement of the railway, roads, port and urban transportation systems was seen as a major infrastructural development in Nigeria as a result of the Chinese investments that were observed during the study period.

In the big picture of Chinese investments in construction and mutual development there are two different perspectives. While critics emphasize 'trade imbalance', 'debt dependency' and the absence of technology transfer, supporters emphasize 'job creation', 'economic integration' and 'technology upgrading' through trade. But there is no doubt that between 2018 and 2025, Chinese investment has indeed helped in the improvement of Nigerian infrastructure.

2.2.2 Chinese Infrastructure Investments in Nigeria’s Mining Sector and Resource Extraction (2018–2025)

Debate was also prevalent on resource extraction especially in the mining sector in Nigeria during the period under review, the Chinese infrastructure investment era (2018-2025). Foreign extraction and export of natural resources, such as lithium, gold, iron ore, coal, tin and other solid minerals for economic and industrial purposes is termed resource extraction. With the beginning of the industrialization of the Chinese economy and the world demand for strategic minerals, the Chinese companies began to boost their activities in Nigeria's mining and extractive sector.

One of the key objections made against the Chinese investments is that they helped to make resources available indirectly by providing roads, railroads and port facilities to the mineral-rich regions. Chinese partnerships to construct infrastructure improved transport connectivity between mining regions and export routes and industrial clusters. Railways and roads were built to aid in moving people, but they also helped to move mined resources from the mining areas to commercial ports and processing plants (Taylor, 2019).

As the world was increasingly adopting renewable energy technologies and industrial manufacturing, and lithium was in great demand for electric vehicle batteries, Chinese companies increasingly showed interest in strategic minerals like lithium. Long-term Chinese mining investors were drawn to the country's huge untapped solid mineral resources that they believed would be critical in funding their projects. There are critics who say that these investments are basically for extraction and exportation of raw resources and not for building local processing factories or promoting local industrialization. Thus, Nigeria continues to export raw materials with foreign Nations reaping more from industrial processing and manufacturing.

Environmental degradation in the vicinity of mining communities is another great problem with the Chinese in Nigeria's mining industry. In other States of the Federation, Nasarawa, Niger, Kaduna and Zamfara, some of the mining sites had environmental problems associated with mining such as land degradation, deforestation, soil erosion and water pollution. Lack of environmental legislation and enforcement increases the risk of unsustainable practices with regard to domestic and international actors (Aidoo, 2021).

The development of mining operations also highlighted issues of working conditions and well-being of the people who live in mining communities. The following issues were raised as serious problems in the discussions on extractive operations in Nigeria: Unsafe working conditions, child labour, poor wages, and forced populations' evictions. Artisanal and illegal mining in some mining areas furthered social insecurity and jeopardized the control of state over mineral resources. The economic advantages of the mining operations do not always translate to a better life for the local people where mining operations are taking place, according to critics.

Another area of concern is the flows that are not legal and leakage of the economy related to extractive activities. While some claim that these profits may be repatriated outside of Nigeria via foreign firms and corrupt financial systems, the developmental gains being left behind in Nigeria's economy are also a subject of debate (Carmody, 2022). Other such factors that reduce the tax revenues to the Nigerian government are illegal export of minerals, underreporting of mineral extraction activities, tax evasion and smuggling. This involvement of foreigners in the mining industry has therefore been a topic of debate with critics claiming that it can go on without adequate monitoring and regulation.

Unfavorable trade balances reinforce issues of resource extraction and dependency. Nigeria sells raw materials and primary commodities to China, and imports manufactured products, machine and industrial equipment from China. Such an imbalance of economic relations is characterized by dependency structures, where developing countries continue to be net exporters of raw materials in the international arena and industrialized countries take advantage of added value products and technological innovations. That the Chinese investment continues to further ensure Nigeria's dependence on external systems and foreign markets, critics have noted.

Additionally, the Chinese control of the funding of projects, technical operations and infrastructure in the strategic areas of the economy, caused unease about external influence and economic sovereignty. As Nigeria is turning to Chinese funding and expertise, China has become more and more influential in Nigeria's economy, especially in the field of infrastructure and mining. Some of the investments are, therefore, viewed by some as an attempt by the Chinese to strengthen their access to Nigeria's commercial markets and natural resources over the long-term, hence the reason.

Supporters of the investment, however, attributed positive effects of Chinese investments to the economic diversification and commercial development of Nigeria. Crude oil export has been one of the key sources of livelihood support for Nigeria and thus efforts are needed to diversify the economy into solid minerals. Chinese capital led to greater explorations, more infrastructure in mining areas and greater commercial activity related to the mineral production. Those who advocate for the proponents, hence, argue that the introduction of more stringent regulations, effective environmental policies and better local involvement will allow for mining investments to benefit Nigeria's economic development.

Moreover, it is believed that problems resulting from the Chinese in Nigeria are not solely attributed to China but rather to the problems of poor governance, corruption and institutional weakness in Nigeria. From this perspective, it is pertinent to strengthen the mining regulations, environmental monitoring systems, labor protection policies and revenue accountability systems in the Nigerian government to ensure sustainable developmental outcomes of foreign investments.

In 2018-2025, China's investment in Nigeria's mining industry has continued to be a topic of discussion about resource extraction, environmental sustainability, economic dependency and external influence. Positive and negative perceptions of the China-Nigeria economic cooperation continued to exist during the period of the study with positive feelings pointing to the positive impacts of Chinese investments on the development of commercial activities and infrastructure in the mining sector while the concerns were mainly over environmental issues, working conditions, illicit financial flows, and the differential economic returns.

2.3 Theoretical Review

Debt Trap Theory is the theory which has been selected for this study and Dependency Theory as well as Neo-colonialism are the theories that will be used to support Debt Trap Theory. These theories provide important perspectives on the development and resource extraction of Chinese investments in Nigerian infrastructure between 2018 and 2025. Debt Trap Theory provides an explanation about the issue of infrastructure financing and indebtedness to another nation while

Dependency Theory and Neo-colonialism Theory provide perspectives about unequal economic relationship and resource extraction.

2.3.1 Debt Trap Theory

According to Debt Trap Theory, there is the possibility for creditor nations to use their leverage over the developing countries in terms of their debts and infrastructural loans. The theory explains that as the developing countries become dependent upon foreign borrowings in terms of their infrastructural and economic developments, they may end up being trapped into a perpetual debt trap that would hamper their economic independence and allow the foreign countries to take control over critical sections of the economy (Hurley, Morris, & Portelance, 2019).

Debt Trap Theory has come under much discussion after concerns have emerged about the financing of overseas infrastructure by China under the BRI framework. The critics of the theory argue that China grants large scale financial support to the developing countries in terms of financing their infrastructural development projects in anticipation of the fact that their debts may eventually be repaid by them through exercising influence in their geopolitical and economic landscapes. When the debtor countries fail to pay off their debts, the creditor countries could wield influence over their critical national resources and economic policies.

The Debt Trap Theory is extremely relevant for Nigeria, given that most of the infrastructural projects conducted in the country from 2018 to 2025 are mainly financed with external loans by Chinese policy banks such as China's Exim Bank. China was the main lender in some of the biggest infrastructural projects in Nigeria that include port building, roads, airports, and railroads. Even though the projects contributed greatly towards the construction of infrastructure, there are concerns that Nigeria's increasing dependency on external financing is raising a lot of debt issues.

According to some people, the increasing dependency on Chinese financing for the development of infrastructure projects in Nigeria may create unfavorable fiscal consequences and increase even more the need for Chinese financial assistance. The increased debt may result in the reduced government expenditure on other important sectors such as agriculture, education, and health care. There are also concerns regarding confidentiality, sovereign guarantees, and foreign financing deals on important infrastructure sectors due to their strategic value.

Thus, the Debt Trap Theory is important for this research in that it provides an understanding of why there is fear regarding the ability of the Chinese investments in the infrastructure projects to promote development and, at the same time, integrate Nigeria into China's economic and strategic framework. The Debt Trap Theory will provide insight into whether the infrastructure financing by China is motivated by mutual development or is a debt trap mechanism meant to increase China's external power.

2.3.2 Dependency Theory

The concept "Dependency Theory" originated in the 1950s and 1960s, by Brazilian thinkers, such as Andre Gunder Frank and Theotonio Dos Santos. This theory explains the unequal nature of economic ties existing between developed and underdeveloped countries in the global economy of capitalism. Dependency theory implies that although underdeveloped countries continue being dependent on industrial nations in terms of finance, technologies, industrial goods, and means of development, they export primary products only (Frank, 2018).

As it is stated by the dependency theorists, foreign investments and foreign trade relations often lead to the existence of unequal economic ties where the wealth and resources get moved from the poor world to the industrialized one. Peripheral countries continue being economically dependent on foreign technologies, foreign finances and foreign markets since they lack their own industrial capacity.

The application of this theory is appropriate because Nigeria is regarded to possess many dependencies in terms of the economic interaction with China. The country supplies to China raw materials and crude oil while China supplies machinery and manufacturing items to Nigeria. The services of Chinese contractors, financing, machinery and expertise are widely employed in Chinese infrastructural projects. As a result, some people argue that Chinese investments may increase Nigeria's dependence upon foreign industrial system and foreign financing.

The problems such as trade imbalance, lack of technology transfers and the domination of outsiders in economic spheres are among other problems considered in Dependency Theory. In this way, this theory will help to look at the possibility of transforming the economy of Nigeria through Chinese investments into infrastructures.

2.3.3 Neo-colonialism Theory

The theory of Neo-colonialism was created and propagated by Kwame Nkrumah in his work "Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism". Although formally the process of decolonization of African nations might have taken place in a number of countries, according to this theory, there exist some strong foreign states which continue exercising their indirect economic and political control by means of investments, trade links and financial dominance (Nkrumah, 2019).

The theory posits that the influence of the stronger economies on developing nations is exercised not politically, but economically. The funding of infrastructure, loans from abroad and strategic sector control are regarded as a tool for this influence.

The importance of this theory to our study comes from the observation that the critics of Chinese investments in Africa consider Chinese growing presence in infrastructure, mining, and trade industries as a new form of economic exploitation. Due to this reason, Chinese enterprises are playing an important role in providing aid to Nigeria in the construction of railways, ports, mining and energy projects in order to increase its presence in important sectors of the Nigerian economy. The theory is also concerned with the use of natural resources as well as the effect of the external world on the natural resources of Nigeria. According to the critics, Chinese investments could be much more about getting access to the market and strategic minerals rather than letting the local industries flourish in order to be economically independent. Environmental degradation, illegal monetary transactions and extraction of raw material resources, particularly mining become even stronger due to neo-colonial concerns.

On the other hand, proponents of the relationship between China and Nigeria argue that the relations are built upon the spirit of mutual cooperation and not through imperialism. Nevertheless, Neo-colonialism Theory still has relevance to explain concerns of outside intervention, dependency, and resource exploitation in the case of Chinese investments in Nigeria from 2018 to 2025.

2.4 Empirical Review

Okeke and Eme (2022) studied the Chinese infrastructural investments and economic development in Nigeria from 2010 to 2021. The study focused on the railway modernization project, building of roads and power lines, which are all funded by China. The researchers applied the qualitative descriptive research design and secondary data were collected through government documents, Infrastructure publications, and Policy documents. The findings revealed the tremendous effect of Chinese investment on Nigeria transportation infrastructure, trade activities and economic modernization. The study also revealed, however, some concerns about the build-up of debt exposure and dependence on external funding.

Ajah and Onuoha (2025) investigated the impact of Belt and Road Initiative on infrastructure diplomacy and transportation modernization in Nigeria. The study adopted the documentary analysis method and the documents analysed were the policy reports, bilateral agreements and records of the transportation sector. The findings show that the projects funded by the Chinese promoted the movement and business in Nigeria. The study also revealed that infrastructures projects increased the trade between the two countries and also brought up the issues of sovereignty and debt sustainability.

Aidoo (2021) examined the trend and involvement of Chinese investors and investors in the local (Nigeria) market in infrastructure development project in the construction industry of Nigeria. The researcher used comparative qualitative research method, data collection techniques which include interviews, project reports and documentary analysis. The findings revealed that the Chinese funded construction projects created jobs, as well as promoting road construction and urbanization. The study, however, showed that the Chinese companies have been dependent on imported machines and technical personnel, limiting technology transfer and the involvement of local industries.

Egbula and Zheng (2022) were on the topic of Chinese infrastructure financing and capacity building in Africa. A mixed methodology survey, document analysis and interviews was utilized in the study in selected African countries including Nigeria. The findings from the analysis indicated that Chinese investments led to the enhancement of transportation facilities and to the increase of business activities in some of the economies of Africa. But the study identified the continuing problem of trade disparities, debt slavery and the absence of local participation in big projects.

Gana, Ibrahim and Yusuf (2024) carried out a study on the impact of Belt and Road initiative on infrastructure development in Nigeria. For the research, the researchers employed a qualitative content analysis method where documents from government, investment records and publications on development were utilized. The results revealed that Chinese infrastructure investments enhanced railway transport, port infrastructure and connectivity of regional trade. The study also revealed that the debt sustainability and economic and strategic dependency on Chinese financing were problems.

Carmody's (2022) research focused on China's involvement in Africa in terms of development and geopolitical implications. The qualitative approach was used in this study, using case studies and trade statistics and policy documents of selected African countries. It was found that Chinese investments played a significant role in infrastructure development and economic growth of Africa. But the study has revealed that Chinese engagement also reinforced the dependency, imbalanced trade and resource extraction trends in some of the African economies such as Nigeria.

Taylor (2019) analysed the growing presence of China in the extractive industries and infrastructure sector in Africa. The data were collected using documentary analysis based on the trade data, policy documents and the reports of the mining sector. The results showed that Chinese infrastructure investment in road, rail and port construction led to increased access to mineral-rich areas of Africa. The study also revealed that Chinese investment in the mining sector is mostly involved in resource extraction and raw material export rather than the process of industrialisation and value addition in China.

The study by Ogunnubi and Aja (2023) covered the economic relationship between China and Nigeria, and the impact of Chinese investment in Nigeria. In this study, qualitative analysis with policy documents, bilateral analysis and trade reports was used. The findings were that the Chinese infrastructure initiatives positively influenced the transportation system and greater trade connectivity and economic cooperation between both nations. The study, however, revealed an increase in worry about trade imbalance, debts and increasing Chinese influence in Nigeria's strategic sectors of the economy.

The external debt and economic vulnerability of Nigeria with regard to foreign infrastructure funding was discussed by Olayiwola and Okodua (2021). The study used time-series analysis and the documentary review was used for the debt statistics and macroeconomic indicators. It was revealed that the stresses and economic fragility of Nigeria were due to their greater dependence on external borrowing. However, excessive dependence on foreign infrastructure financing may make a "bad impact" on the long-term economic sustainability and national economic sovereignty, the researchers said.

Within the context of resources extraction and global economy, Bridge (2020) researched in the context of developing economies. Qualitative documentary analysis, which comprised of mining reports, environmental studies and trade statistics, was conducted using the study. The findings indicated that extractive industries in the developing world are generally more beneficial to the foreign industrial economies than to the domestic economies due to the unequal trade structures and less ability of the domestic countries to process them. It also found that environmental degradation, illicit financial flows and dependency are some other results of weak governance and foreign domination in extractive industries in resource rich nations like Nigeria.

2.5 Summary and Gap in Literature

In this study, literature reviewed looked at the Chinese infrastructure investments in Nigeria with special attention on the mutual development and resource extraction, 2018-2025. It was found that there are two types of cooperative economic relationship, mutual development and mutual resource extraction, which would benefit participating countries both on the side of development and trade, in the first case, natural resources are being extracted for industry and in the second case for commerce. The review also revealed that Chinese infrastructure projects are primarily concerned with financing and building of railways, roads, ports, airport terminals and other strategic infrastructure projects, via the Chinese policy banks and construction companies.

The thematic review confirmed that Chinese investments in infrastructure contributed to infrastructure modernization, increase in trade, job creation and development in Nigeria. Various institutions and projects, such as the Abuja Light Rail and Lekki Deep Sea Port and railway modernisation projects, were set up to improve transportation infrastructure and commercial connections. The review, however, also highlighted the issues of trade imbalance, debt burden, lack of technology transfer and the rising Chinese leverage in some key sectors of the Nigerian economy.

The review also showed that Chinese operations in Nigerian mining also raised the topic of resource extraction, the environment, job creation and money laundering. The rationale of the scholars is that the infrastructure projects have allowed access to areas that are rich in minerals, and have encouraged the removal and export of raw materials. There were also concerns that there was a lack of effective regulation, environmental harm and unequal economic benefits of foreign participation in extractive industries.

Theories that were used as theoretical background were Debt Trap Theory and the supporting theoretical were Dependency Theory and Neo-colonialism Theory. The concept of 'Debt Trap theory' was employed to gain insights into how excessive dependence on foreign loans can make an economy vulnerable and thus open to external influence. The Dependency Theory emphasized on the unequal economic relations between the developed and the developing world, and Neo-colonialism Theory is about the indirect influence that foreign powers might have through their economic and infrastructural control. The theories taken as a whole gave the analytical underpinning of the developmental and extractive aspect of Chinese investments in Nigeria.

The empirical review also showed that though Chinese investments had helped Nigeria to modernize the infrastructure and carry out some economic activities, issues of debt sustainability, extraction of resources, environmental degradation and dependency were central in the existing scholarship. Reviewed studies therefore indicated that the Chinese investment in infrastructure offers developmental opportunity and poses structural challenges to Nigeria economy.

Previous research on the Chinese investment in Nigeria and Africa has been heavily studied on the aspects of infrastructure development, debt diplomacy, China-Africa trade relations and economic dependency. Gana et al (2024); Ajah and Onuoha (2025); and Okeke and Eme (2022) specifically examined the developmental impact of Chinese investment for the modernisation of transportation, trade connectivity and infrastructure development. Other researchers, such as Carmody (2022), Taylor (2019) and Olayiwola and Okodua (2021) have concentrated more on dependency and debt sustainability in the China-Africa economic relations, as well as on resource extraction.

There is a lot of literature, but some questions yet remain unanswered. Firstly, some previous research has been done on Chinese investments in Africa without paying attention to the case of Nigeria for the period 2018-2025. Second, many studies have been developed on development of Chinese investment or the dependency of Chinese investment, but with no integrated study that critically considered the two aspects.

In addition, studies focused mainly on transportation infrastructure and debt funding, neglecting to afford scholarly attention to the link between Chinese infrastructure investments in Nigeria mining industry and resource extraction. Some issues that are yet to be sufficiently explored include environment degradation, financial flows, labour issues and strategic mineral extraction in the Nigerian context.

The second drawback was found was the failure to examine particular Chinese infrastructure projects in Nigeria on a project-by-project basis and over time from 2018 to 2025 (which was taken as the time the projects are expected to be completed).Another serious drawback that was identified is that there is no detailed project-based and timeline analysis of specific Chinese infrastructure projects in Nigeria that is constructed between 2018 and 2025 which is the end-date set for the project completion. As a result, there is little direct literature available on the relationship between infrastructure projects, investment values, growth in bilateral trade and extractive activities to the main discussion of mutually beneficial development or resource extraction.

This study thus aims to fill these gaps with a specific study of Chinese infrastructure investment in Nigeria over the period 2018-2025, from the dual perspectives of mutual development and resource extraction. This study emphasis only on the analysis of Chinese investment in the construction industry and the mining industry in Nigeria and the effect that Chinese investment has on the economic development, trading relationship, debt dependency, environmental sustainability and resource governance in Nigeria.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is Debt Trap Theory which is the dominant theory used in the analysis of the Chinese infrastructure investments and mutual resource extraction and development issues in Nigeria in the period under study (2018-2025).

The scholars who are often linked with Debt Trap Theory include, among others, Brahma Chellaney who popularized the concept in discussions relating to Chinese overseas lending and infrastructure financing under the Belt and Road Initiative. The theory explains how the powerful creditor countries can exploit loans and infrastructure loans as a way to exercise economic, political and strategic power over the developing countries. Based on the theory, developing nations are more likely to end up in unsustainable debts as they borrow heavily for supplying infrastructure which may ultimately lead to a reduction in their economic autonomy and their reliance on loan giving nations (Hurley, Morris, & Portelance, 2019).

One of the core points of Debt Trap Theory is that developing countries make themselves susceptible to foreign loans, where they become dependent and would be controlled from the outside. The theory was that the creditor country could allow for large infrastructure loans to the weaker country's economy with the expectation that if it was unable to pay back the loan then it could be an opportunity to make strategic concessions, economic influence or more control over key national assets. Infrastructure projects can therefore be seen as an economic agreement as well as a geopolitical move to raise the foreign footprint in the countries where they are being implemented.

Another assumption of the theory is that important is the fact that often developing countries accept large infrastructure loans due to the pressing need for development as well as lack of own finance. However, in a lot of cases governments with critical infrastructure deficits might be more interested in infrastructure development than in assessing debt sustainability, repayment terms and external dependency. The theory of debt trap also argues that poor institutional development, corruption, and weak negotiation and opaque loan contracts can make developing countries more susceptible to external financial pressures.

The theory also states that such external loans to finance infrastructure projects can lead to dependency relations, if foreign creditors hold a dominant position in the financing, technical aspects and implementation processes of the infrastructure projects. This dependency can stifle domestic development of industries, technological progress and economic self-sufficiency. Further, the theory also emphasizes that higher debt burden can cause additional stress to developing countries' fiscal resources; the fiscal resources can be allocated to debt servicing rather than social and economic development of the countries.

Debt Trap Theory is suitable for this study because the majority of Chinese infrastructure projects in Nigeria since 2018 till 2025 have been financed by loans and bilateral funding agreements between the Chinese government and the Nigerian government, provided by the Chinese policy banks which include the Export-Import Bank of China, and the China Development Bank. Significant Chinese financing and participation in construction on the major projects, such as the Abuja Light Rail project, Lekki Deep Sea Port project, Lagos–Ibadan railway and Kaduna–Kano railway modernization were involved.

The projects have been able to modernize transportation and infrastructure in Nigeria, but there was a concern about Nigeria's increasing dependence on Chinese loans and financing. There is scepticism amongst some critics that Nigeria will be left to become an economic victim of Chinese sponsored infrastructure projects based on its mounting debts. There has also been concerns about the imbalance of trade, restricted technology transfer and the domination of the Chinese firms in the Nigeria economy's critical areas.

The Debt Trap Theory can also be used to apply the Chinese and the Nigerian infrastructure investments in the mining industry. Enhanced transportation connectivity (roads, railways, ports etc.), promoted increased access to mineral rich areas and reinforced the extraction and export of raw materials. As a result, critics argue that infrastructure funding can be indirect in terms of allowing access to strategic natural resources by foreigners, and infrastructure funding can also contribute to dependency on foreign capital and industrial systems.

Furthermore, the theory helps to understand the problems of economic sovereignty and strategic influence. The Chinese influence on the Nigerian economy is on the rise in critical areas while Nigeria continues to rely on Chinese funds for development and infrastructure as China strives to expand its economic footprint in Nigeria. This helps to confirm the main point of Debt Trap Theory which is that infrastructure finance may enable the establishment of long-term dependency relationships that can further reinforce foreign economic and geopolitical influence in developing countries.

Despite these criticisms, those who advocate Chinese investments feel that the funding of infrastructure is required to address Nigeria's infrastructural problems and to grow the economy. Debt Trap Theory, however, is very relevant to this study because of the importance it has in the development opportunities and dependency risks of Chinese infrastructure investments in Nigeria between 2018 and 2025.

3.2 Hypotheses

These hypotheses have been formulated to guide the research:

H_1: The Chinese investments in infrastructure through construction in Nigeria led to the development of both parties between 2018 and 2025.

H_2: The Chinese infrastructure investments in the mining sector in Nigeria contributed to resource extraction from 2018 to 2025.

3.3 Research Design

Ex post facto research design was used in designing the study. The Ex post facto research design is ideal for research studies aimed at investigating already existing events, conditions, or phenomena without manipulating the variables by the researcher. As stated by Kerlinger & Lee (2000), the ex post facto design helps researchers to examine the relationship or outcome that has been established based on history and documentation of the event under investigation. Thus, it suits political, economic, and developmental issues which do not have experimentally controllable variables.

Use of the ex post facto design in this particular case study is relevant since the Chinese infrastructure investment in Nigeria from 2018 to 2025 was done prior to the conduct of the study. Infrastructure projects including Abuja Light Rail, Lekki Deep Sea Port, Lagos-Ibadan rail network, upgrade of Kaduna-Kano railway network, and Chinese mineral extraction operations in the solid minerals sector of Nigeria had all been completed prior to or at the time of conducting the study. Hence, it was only possible to analyze their development and extraction consequences from existing records.

The research concentrates on the role played by Chinese investments in Nigeria’s construction and mining industry. The ex post facto design helps the researcher in analyzing transportation development, growth in bilateral trade, upgrading of infrastructure, employment creation, and business growth due to Chinese investments. Additionally, it helps the researcher to investigate debt dependency, environmental degradation, trade imbalance, illicit money flows, and resource extraction due to the involvement of China in Nigeria’s economy.

The reason why the ex post facto design is considered to be appropriate in carrying out this research is that the study depends on secondary data sources. The design makes it possible for the researcher to use academic journals, policy papers, government documents, bilateral treaties, infrastructure reports, trade figures, mining reports, and media papers to investigate Chinese infrastructure investment in Nigeria.

Moreover, the ex post facto design allows the researcher to critically assess the wider political and economic ramifications of the Chinese infrastructure investments in Nigeria. The ex post facto design offers the framework through which the researcher can explore concerns like economic sovereignty, strategic advantage, technological dependence, and economic domination linked to foreign infrastructure development.

Ex post facto research design is appropriate in studies in which manipulation of the variables is not feasible due to the occurrence of the event, according to Kerlinger & Lee (2000). This study utilizes the ex post facto research design to critically examine whether the Chinese infrastructure investments in Nigeria from 2018 to 2025 contributed to mutual development or resource extraction and dependence.

3.4 Method of Data Collection

The data collection method applied in this study is secondary data where data is information that has already been used by other researchers through the available sources that are considered reliable. Secondary data is also vital for studies in international relations, political economy, and development studies since it gives information on the historical, institutional and analytical dimensions of a topic that may be difficult to generate (Saunders et al., 2019). The secondary data is secondary data for the period being studied (2018-2025), thus the application of secondary data is the best means to extract information that is required for the study.

This study made use of data that has been generated from academic journals, books, governmental publications, policy papers, bilateral papers, infrastructure investment reports, trade publications and reliable media archives. Specifically, World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), African Development Bank (AfDB), Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Debt Management Office (DMO) and Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) were the sources of information.

The study also drew on relevant reports on some Chinese-funded infrastructural undertakings such as the Abuja Light Rail Project, Lekki Deep Sea Port, Lagos-Ibadan rail and Kaduna-Kano rail modernization in Nigeria. Information on the cost of investment, expansion of trade, mining, environment and economic relationship between Nigeria and China was obtained from government reports, literature, policies and development papers.

Moreover, the media sources were considered for current updates on the Chinese investment, mining, debt financing and infrastructure development during the study period including sources like Reuters, BBC, Al Jazeera, The Guardian and Africa business newspapers. Such sources have been selected based on the recommendations by Bryman (2016) that sources should be credible, relevant, reliable and current.

The study period ranged from 2018 to 2025 which indicated the great achievements made in Chinese infrastructure undertakings in Nigeria's construction and mining industry. The study period also included the period of the Belt and Road Initiative to build infrastructure in China and the controversies surrounding the concepts of 'mutual development' and 'debt dependency' between Nigeria and China, in addition to resource extraction issues.

3.5 Method of Data Analysis

For this research, the data analysis tools that have been used are the Qualitative Content Analysis and the Historical/Documentary analysis. This type of data analysis tool is appropriate since much of the data that is used in this research is taken from secondary sources and since this research examines the development and extractive impacts of the Chinese infrastructure investments in Nigeria between 2018 and 2025.

Content analysis is a well-known methodology for examining themes, patterns, meanings, and relationships in texts in Political Science, International Relations and Development Studies (Krippendorff, 2018). For this research, the content analysis method was applied in order to uncover the major themes of mutual benefits, modernization of infrastructure, trade expansion, dependency on debt, environmental degradation and resource extraction in relation to China – Nigeria relations.

The research pays special attention to such Chinese-funded projects as Abuja Light Rail project, Lekki Deep Sea Port, Lagos -Ibadan railway and Kaduna – Kano railway modernization. It is important to emphasize the project location, investment volume, timeframe, trade, mining and overall impact of the Chinese investments in the Nigerian construction and mining industry.

Historical and Documentary analysis was also employed in order to assess the progress of investments in infrastructure by the Chinese Government in Nigeria between 2018 and 2025. This approach helped the researcher to investigate the effect of Chinese investments in terms of change in the investment level with time and its effect on the bilateral trading relationship and infrastructure development. Moreover, it helped in identifying recurrent issues such as debt financing, trade imbalance, illicit financial flow, environmental degradation, and technology transfer issues.

The data collected were categorized into major themes in line with the objective and hypothesis of the research. Such themes include improvements in transport facilities, employment generation and capacity building, trade imbalance, and technological transfer issues and were investigated under Hypothesis One. Hypothesis Two themes include environmental degradation in the mining sector, human problems, and illegal money transfer.

As the research is qualitative, no statistical techniques have been applied in the study. Instead, triangulation has been applied to increase the validity of the findings by comparing the data obtained from academic articles, governmental documents, international organizations, infrastructure reports, and reputable news media. The analytical approach allowed looking at the interaction between the Chinese Infrastructure investments, common development, and resource exploitation in Nigeria thoroughly.

3.6 Logical Framework of the Study

The logical framework of this research is taken as a basis to link the research question, hypothesis, important variables, empirical indicators, data collection techniques, data sources, and data analysis techniques. All the components of the research are logically connected within the framework to achieve the ultimate goal of the research, which is the following: To investigate the impact of Chinese investments in infrastructure development in Nigeria for the period from 2018 till 2025 on mutual development or resource extraction. It also provides methodological guidelines for analyzing the relationship between China's investments in infrastructure in the construction and mining industries of Nigeria.

Table 3.1: Logical Framework of the Study

Research Questions	Hypotheses	Major Variables	Empirical Indicators	Method of Data Collection	Sources of Data	Method of Data Analysis
How has Chinese infrastructure investments in construction in Nigeria enhanced mutual development between 2018 and 2025?	H_1: Chinese infrastructure investments in construction in Nigeria enhanced mutual development between 2018 and 2025.	X: Chinese infrastructure investments in construction in Nigeria. Y: Enhanced mutual development between 2018 and 2025.	X: 157.0 million dollars for rolling stocks and depot investments for Abuja Light Rail construction (2018); 629.0 million dollars for Lekki Deep Sea Port construction (2019); 264.9 million dollars for Lagos–Kano railway modernization and Kaduna–Kano section (2023). Y: 22.3 billion dollars Nigeria–China bilateral trade volume (2025); 30% increase in trade growth between 2018 and 2025.	Documentary method	Government reports, World Bank publications, AfDB reports, academic journals, infrastructure reports, bilateral trade reports, media archives	Qualitative content analysis, historical analysis
How have Chinese infrastructure investments in Nigeria's mining sector engendered resource extraction between 2018 and 2025?	H_2: Chinese infrastructure investments in Nigeria's mining sector engendered resource extraction between 2018 and 2025.	X: Chinese infrastructure investments in Nigeria's mining sector. Y: Resource extraction between 2018 and 2025.	X: Chinese mining investments in lithium, gold, and solid mineral extraction in Nasarawa, Niger, Kaduna, and Zamfara states; infrastructure development around mining locations. Y: Environmental degradation around mining sites; labor and human concerns; illegal financial flows associated with extractive activities between 2018 and 2025.	Documentary method	Mining reports, government publications, academic journals, environmental reports, policy documents, international development reports, media archives	Thematic content analysis, documentary analysis

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Chinese Infrastructure Investments in Construction and Mutual Development in Nigeria (2018–2025)

It has emerged that China's investments in Nigeria's infrastructure from 2018 to 2025 formed an integral part of driving Nigeria's transportation infrastructure, seaports, urban mobility, and connectivity. Over this period, the Chinese policy banks and construction firms financed and implemented a number of strategic infrastructure developments in Nigeria under bilateral agreements and the Belt and Road Initiative.

The Chinese also experienced an increase in investments in rail modernization, ports infrastructure, roads development, and urban mobility during the period. These projects were being made available as investments by both the Nigerian and Chinese governments as a way of ensuring modernization, efficient transportation, expansion of bilateral trade, and mutual development between the two countries. However, the projects were surrounded by controversies on a number of fronts such as debt sustainability, trade imbalances, limited technology transfer and increased Chinese influence in strategic economic sectors of Nigeria.

Some of the critical infrastructure projects which have been funded by China in Nigeria from 2018-2025 are considered here, and it is seen that their investments led to mutual development in the study period.

4.1.1 Timeline of Major Chinese Construction Infrastructure Investments in Nigeria (2018–2025)

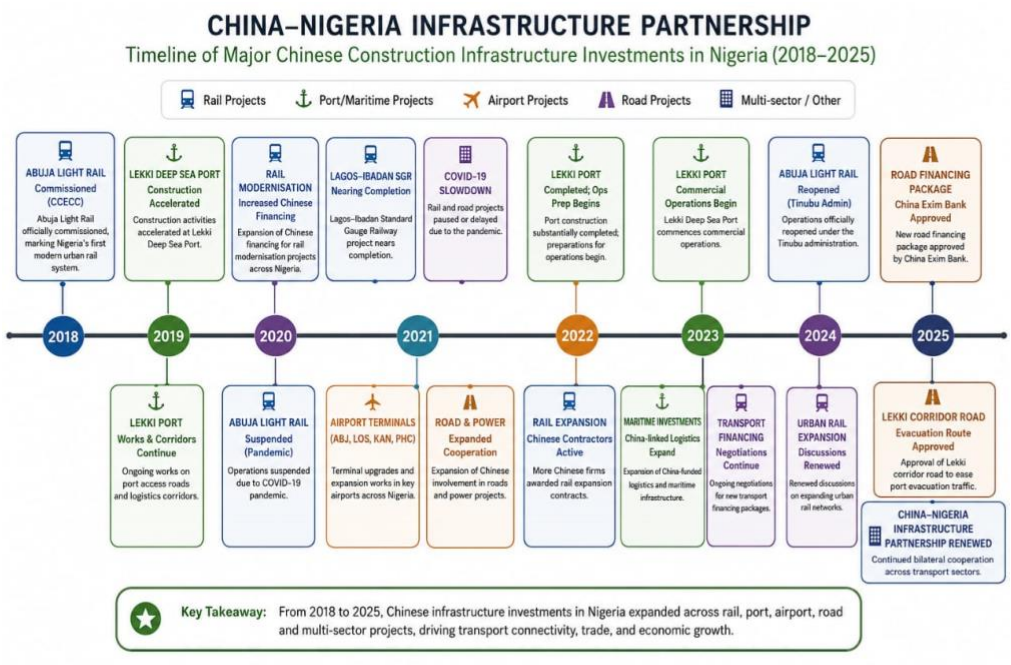

Figure 1

One of the most important projects in Nigeria supported by Chinese funding in 2018 was the Abuja Light Rail project located in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. China provided financial aid to spend money in rolling stock, depot works, while most of the works were supervised by China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation to spend some 157 million dollars. The Abuja Light Rail is the first modern urban light rail transport system in Nigeria that was created in order to improve the mobility of people in Nigeria, solve the problem of traffic congestion in Abuja and improve the transportation system.

The Abuja Light Rail project greatly contributed to the development of the transport system of the country, since it improved the mobility of people in urban areas, as well as facilitated access to strategic points like Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport. Employment of engineers, engineers' technicians, construction workers and support services appeared during the construction and operation of this project. The railway was used to enhance transportation and increase the accessibility of the city for businesses.

In 2019, the Chinese had played an essential role in assisting with the investment into the development of the maritime infrastructure of Nigeria through the Lekki Deep Sea Port project in Lagos State. This project cost about 629 million dollars and would have been one of the largest port infrastructure projects in West Africa. The Chinese had contributed to this port project when there were a number of stakeholders from Nigeria participating in this project, and there were a lot of Chinese engineers involved in the engineering process of constructing this project.

The Lekki Deep Sea Port project aimed at increasing the capacity of the Nigerian port for transporting goods to assist the maritime trade and reduce the congestion of the existing port in Lagos. This project was helpful to the international trade infrastructure of Nigeria since it allowed using larger ships in logistics.

Additionally, the project facilitated the bilateral economic relationship between Nigeria and China, ensuring ease of trade between the two countries. The development of port infrastructure also played a crucial part in the development of Nigeria-China trade relations valued at $22.3 billion in 2025, a figure that has been recognized as a 30 percent increase in the trade between the two countries within the period 2018-2025.

The Lagos-Kano railway modernization project was yet another important infrastructure project under implementation during the study period especially concerning the Kaduna-Kano section that commenced in 2023. The total value of investments by China in the Kaduna-Kano section was valued at $264.9 million covering the distance of 203km. This was one of the National Railway Modernization Projects intended to connect all the major cities of Nigeria.

It is clear that through this railway modernization project, there was an increased connection between transport in northern and southern parts of Nigeria, making it possible to move agricultural products, manufactured goods, and business services easily within the country. Through this efficient railway transport, congestion along roads was reduced, the cost of transport reduced, and the efficiency of domestic transactions increased.

Secondly, there were some Nigerian workers who participated in the construction project in order to create jobs. Besides, some Nigerians got skilled in cartoing through the Chinese engineers and construction firms developing the railway.

Chinese firms have also been involved in the modernisation of the aircraft handling facilities of several airports in Nigeria, development of roads and urban development of various states of Nigeria in the period ranging from 2018-2025. This kind of development has played a critical role in the modernisation of infrastructure and commercial activities in the major cities. Infrastructure development, thus, funded by Chinese money has become very common in Nigeria's transport and urban development industry.

The developmental benefits of such infrastructure projects have been highlighted, but it has also been pointed out that there are certain disadvantages of having infrastructure projects which require financing through debts. The main source of finance of these infrastructure projects is foreign loan and bilateral contracts with Chinese policy banks. Rising fiscal burden and debt levels in Nigeria owing to the dependence of the country on Chinese funds for its development have been mentioned as some of the concerns of the critics. Some of the other concerns are those related to lack of transparency in the loan contract and dominance of Chinese companies in implementing these projects.

The other topic that started discussions was that of trade imbalance. It should be noted that even though the two countries had infrastructure projects designed to facilitate their bilateral trade, there was much more tilt in favor of China. Nigeria exported its primary goods in the form of crude oil and raw materials, and imported raw material goods, machinery, and industrial equipment primarily from China. Also, there was a concern regarding the unequal division of the benefits gained from the joint venture between the USA and UK in terms of infrastructural projects.

In addition to this, the problem of technology transfer became a topic of conversation during the time of research. The use of foreign machinery, technical personnel of Chinese origin, as well as foreign engineering technologies became prevalent when it came to construction companies from China. Despite creating employment opportunities through infrastructure projects, local participation in technical and advanced industrial work was not much.

Nevertheless, investments in the Chinese construction industry between 2018-2025 have helped in the various aspects of transportation, commercial connectivity, and urban development and expansion in Nigeria. From the railway, port and transport industry, the effects of investments made by the Chinese into infrastructure and economy of Nigeria within the research period were apparent in Nigeria.

4.1.2 Improvement in Transport Facilities

One of the most crucial events of this period was the construction of infrastructure in Nigeria by the Chinese from 2018 to 2025, during which the Chinese played an instrumental role in improving the transport infrastructure in Nigeria. The rail constructed by the Chinese, development of ports, modernization of the airports, and construction of roads were all crucial elements that contributed towards the modernization of Nigeria's transport infrastructure and economic integration in commercial and industrial centers. It is widely acknowledged that transportation infrastructure is one of the vital factors that can impact economic development because it impacts mobility and logistics cost reduction and promotes trading activities (Okeke & Eme, 2022).

Before the huge number of public-private partnerships initiated by the Chinese government, Nigeria had been facing many transport infrastructural challenges, including poor rail infrastructure, road congestion, poor port facilities, and poor public transport system. Negative impacts of such infrastructural challenges on businesses, cost of transport, and economic integration of the region have been identified (Gana et al., 2024; Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2024). The need for the investment by the Chinese thus became even more urgent to solve these transportation problems.

The other important project that took place within the research period is the Abuja Light Rail project. This particular project cost 157 million dollars in rolling stock and depot investments made through the financial assistance provided by China, and executed by China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation in 2018. The railway network made the transportation in the city easier and provided convenient ways to move from one end of the city to another and even reach Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport. According to Ajah and Onuoha (2025), the development of the Abuja Light Rail was a crucial step towards the modernization of the transportation sector in the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria.

Similarly, the modernization of the Lagos-Ibadan railway has significantly contributed to the enhancement of transportation connections between Lagos and the key commercial cities of the south-west region of the country. Through this project, the transportation of people and goods became easier, faster and cheaper compared to the road transport. According to Okeke and Eme (2022), the upgraded railway transportation helped develop the trade and facilitated the movement of the agricultural, industrial and business products across the key economic corridors. Another major infrastructure project that was implemented in 2023 was the modernization of the Kaduna – Kano railway line. The amount of Chinese financing for the Kaduna-Kano railway line was estimated at 264.9 million dollars while the total length of the project amounted to 203 kilometers. This railway project contributed to the improvement of transport connections between northern parts of Nigeria and other areas of the state. Gana et al. (2024) highlight the fact that railway modernization projects made an important contribution to regional integration since they helped to improve transport connections between regions and decreased the influence of the road infrastructure on the transport system.

Also, the Chinese investments promoted the development of maritime transport infrastructure in the Lekki Deep Sea Port of Lagos State. According to Gana et al. (2024), the total cost of this project in 2019 exceeded 629 million dollars, thus becoming one of the largest projects related to the port infrastructure development in West Africa. This port allowed increasing the efficiency of maritime logistics in Nigeria and cargo handling capacity. The Lekki Deep Sea Port made an important contribution to the development of trade infrastructure in Nigeria and improved its commercial connectivity with international markets.

Infrastructure within the aviation industry in Nigeria has also benefited from improvements undertaken by the Chinese company. International connectivity of the airports in Abuja, Lagos, Kano and Port Harcourt has increased through the improvement of their facilities for the movement of passengers and operational efficiency of these facilities. Development of airport infrastructure positively influenced the development of tourism, foreign investments and commercial activity in urban regions (Ajah & Onuoha, 2025).

The accessibility of transportation improved with completion of construction and rehabilitation of roads in various regions of Nigeria. Good roads helped trade and transportation of products, service and economic activity in urban and rural areas. Improvement in transport infrastructure reduced costs of business operations and enhanced commercial integration among various sectors of the economy in Nigeria (Egbula & Zheng, 2022).

Transport infrastructure development also contributed to improvement of the economic relationship between Nigeria and China. Trade efficiency and commercial interactions between two countries were improved owing to better logistics system, rail transport, ports and roads. It is reported that the bilateral trade volume between Nigeria and China reached N22.3 trillion in 2025, increasing by almost 30% between 2018 and 2025 (Gana et al., 2024).

Despite all the above-mentioned advances, the issue of debt sustainability and the dependency on Chinese technical know-how for the maintenance and operation of transport infrastructure remained problematic in some cases, where projects relied heavily on Chinese engineering systems, machinery and technical experts, thus limiting local technological development and operational independence (Carmody, 2022).

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the effects of Chinese infrastructural investments in Nigeria during the period of 2018 – 2025 are well documented in the literature and prove to be highly beneficial to the transport infrastructure of Nigeria.

4.2 Chinese infrastructure investments in Nigeria's mining sector engendered resource extraction between 2018 and 2025.

Chart showing the Chronological Development of Chinese Investments and Mining Activities in Nigeria (2018-2025)

The chart above depicts the steady growth of China's interest in Nigeria's mining industry from 2018 to 2025. It shows how China's investment has moved beyond the construction of infrastructure towards the extraction of lithium, gold, iron ore, and other solid minerals from states like Nasarawa, Niger, Kaduna, Zamfara, and Kogi.

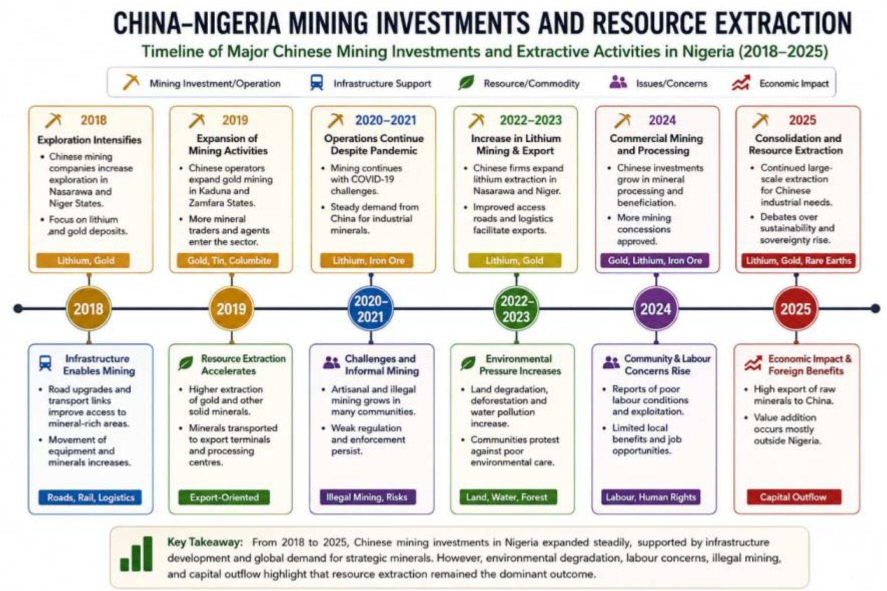

Figure 2

From the timeline, one can also see how infrastructure projects such as road construction, railway lines, and logistics facilities, among others, served to indirectly support mining activities by making mining areas more accessible and providing means for moving mineral resources to places where the resources were to be processed and exported. The projects not only encouraged commercial mining but also increased debates about environmental degradation, labor issues, and illegal mining.

4.2.1 Environmental Degradation Around Nigerian Mining Sites

The main concern regarding the investments of China in Nigeria from 2018-2025 is environmental degradation in the mining communities. The mining operations by Chinese miners in states like Nasarawa, Niger, Zamfara, Kaduna, and Kogi states have created serious ecological problems such as land degradation, deforestation, soil erosion, water pollution, and loss of agricultural lands.

In this research period, there has been an increase in the area of mines. This has caused pressure on the ecosystem because of changes in the natural landscape and deterioration of the natural vegetation surrounding the mining areas. The open pit mining and unregulated mining in various communities have resulted in negative impacts on the agricultural lands and agricultural productivity. Several organizations of the environment and community members have stated that the rivers and water sources have been contaminated as a result of the lack of proper waste management and chemical contamination from mining activities.

The mining of lithium increased from 2022 to 2025, prompting the question about its impact on the environment and societies since there was an increasing demand for lithium in the making of batteries used in electric vehicles and renewable energy sources. The infrastructure built up in the mining regions improved the transportation in order to help out the mining and increased the mining of lithium in Nasarawa and Niger States because of the commercial lithium found there which attracted foreign investments.

Very little was done about environmental governance in some of the mining sites. Illegal mining activities which were not regulated much still existed in the rural areas. This caused unsustainable extraction processes along with no environmental monitoring and cleanup. It was feared that in some of the mining activities the economy was prioritized above the environment and community welfare.

Evidence

There have been increases in reported cases of environmental degradation, deforestation, damage to waterbodies and disturbance to the ecosystems surrounding mining areas due to mining operations by foreign and locally-owned mining firms between 2018 and 2025. Commercialization of mining activities also increased due to improvements in the transportation infrastructure that enabled easy access to some inaccessible communities.

The findings indicate that mining investment financed by Chinese government and company have contributed significantly to environmental pressure in some of the mining communities studied during the study period. Lack of proper environmental management practices and commercial extraction activities resulted in environmental degradation of some mines, whereas infrastructural developments and mining investment facilitated commercial and foreign investment.

Theoretical Link

The theory of debt trap suggests that the relationship of investment from outside with the primary aim of economic and strategic considerations could give rise to the process of exploitation in developing nations. According to this theory, it has been found that the extraction of the resources became possible due to investments and development of infrastructure.

4.2.2 Labour and Human Concerns

Human/labour issues have also been mentioned as major problems related to the Nigerian aspect of Chinese investments in the Nigerian mines between 2018 and 2025. In several cases, mining operations were criticised for poor and inadequate working conditions, protection, salary and labour practices, as well as the lack of the involvement of local people in the process of management and technical operations.

In several mining regions, artisanal miners and local workers carried out their duties under difficult and dangerous conditions, without access to proper safety equipment or health care facilities. According to the reports of local people, accidents, injuries, and exposure to harmful environmental conditions happened quite often in informal mining operations. Some communities also complained about forced displacement from their ancestral lands, as well as lack of any compensation for the expansion of mining operations.

Chinese miners were also accused of “profit seeking” and ignoring workers’ welfare and development of local communities, among other things. Mining has created employment opportunities for the locals, but most of them were poorly paid and low-skilled jobs. As far as the mining industry is concerned, local capacity development used to be limited by the predominance of foreign personnel or owners of the mines who had their own interests.

Another aspect that needs to be highlighted is social tensions arising between the mining companies and local communities. Even though there was large-scale mineral production going on in the local communities, there were complaints from local communities about inadequate care taken by mining firms in this respect.

Evidence

From the reports and media investigations done in 2018-2025, there have been several issues concerning labor disputes, unsafe work environments in the mining regions and complains from different mining communities in Nigeria. In communities where there is mining of minerals, there have been cases of illegal mining operations, exploitation of the laborers and unsuitable occupational health conditions.

Analysis

It can be seen that the Chinese miners created jobs and economic activities within their mines, but even still, there were many cases of human and labour right violations. The investment made in mining had little developmental impact due to poor labor policies, lax implementation of mining regulations and lack of benefit distribution.

Theoretical Link

According to Debt Trap Theory, the dependency approach tends to undermine the bargaining power of developing nations or communities in an economically funded arrangement. In the case of the mining industry, commercial and extractive interests tended to take precedence over labor welfare, local empowerment, and community sustainability.

4.2.3 Illegal Financial Flows

Another important issue that arose as a result of mining investment by China in Nigeria from 2018 to 2025 was that of illegal financial flows.

A number of sources show that there was an increase in illegal mining and informal mineral trade networks, especially those related to the extraction of gold and lithium minerals.

Loopholes in the regulation of the mining sector, as well as corruption in the mining sector, allowed illegal commercial activities through mineral exports and financial flows that took place outside official government supervision.

The transportation of minerals that had been extracted via informal routes lowered government revenues and reduced Nigeria's capacity to maximize the benefits of the mineral wealth. The reason for this was the belief that most of the economic gains derived from the extraction of the minerals were diverted abroad via international business dealings and not used for local industrial growth.

Another issue was that there was not much value addition in Nigeria. Raw or minimally refined minerals from Nigeria were exported abroad to be processed and manufactured into various products, especially in China, and profits accrued from industrialization and manufacturing were made abroad.

Evidence

Between the period 2018 and 2025, there was growing anxiety about the issue of criminal mining networks, smuggling of solid minerals, and money leakages in the mining industry of Nigeria. The issues of lithium and gold mining especially raised anxieties related to the informal export process and financial opacity.

Analysis

Based on the findings, it is evident that mining operations connected to China were one of the factors that led to the growth of illegal financial transactions as well as extractive networks within the mining industry of Nigeria. This is due to weak regulatory mechanisms and export-led extraction.

Theoretical Link

According to the Debt Trap Theory, external investment structures can lead to dependency through a process of extractive exports, leading to an outflow of economic value. In the mining industry of Nigeria, the development of infrastructure and foreign mining investments have led to increased extraction and exports of strategic minerals while leaving most of the economic gains outside the country.

4.3 Synthesis of Findings

However, the results obtained through this research prove both hypotheses stated in chapter three. The evidence from Chinese investments in the construction sector of Nigeria proves the fact that Chinese investment in railway projects, ports, roads, and transportation systems helped in the development of infrastructural modernization, transportation, trade, and employment creation during the years 2018 to 2025.

On the other hand, however, the results also indicate the fact that the Chinese investments made in the mining sector of Nigeria strengthened the extractive economic system that is associated with environmental pollution, labour issues, illegal financial transactions, and dependency on the external industrial economy for exportation of minerals. Even though infrastructure development promoted business activities, the overall economic system was more beneficial for the external industrial economy than the local one.

The Debt Trap theory provides an adequate explanation for the dual role played by Chinese investments in infrastructure in Nigeria. Even though investment in infrastructure helped to bring about development, it made Nigeria more dependent on foreign funding, technology, and business deals. Therefore, from this study, it is concluded that Chinese investments in infrastructure in Nigeria between 2018 and 2025 brought about mutual and extractive development.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

In this study, the research sought to determine the effect that the relationship between these two countries, namely China and Nigeria had on their mutual development and resource harvesting during the period 2018-2025 in Nigeria. In carrying out this study, the two major sectors were mainly considered; construction sector and mining sector. Debt trap theory was used in interpreting the data collected for the study from secondary sources, while using documentary methods and content analysis.

From the study findings, the infrastructural modernization and infrastructural development in Nigeria during the study period was one of the major factors resulting from Chinese infrastructural investment. Some of the major projects funded by China in Nigeria included "Light Rail Abuja", "Lagos Deep Sea Port", "Lagos – Ibadan Railway" and "Kaduna – Kano Railway" modernization project which had greatly improved the transport efficiency and urban mobility in Nigeria. In addition to this, the research established that these projects had improved transport and movement of goods and services, reduced transport cost and regional trade integration and growth of bilateral trade between Nigeria and China.

It was observed that Chinese investments provided employment and even some kind of exposure to technical knowledge for Nigerian labor force and engineers while building infrastructural projects. There was also an increase in economic activities around the area of projects sites and commercial cooperation between Nigeria and China because of improvements in railway lines, ports, roads and modernization of airports. This indicates that the results support first hypothesis stating that the Chinese infrastructure investment in construction accelerated mutual development in 2018-2025.

However, despite such positive development results, it was found out that due to the situation of dependency on China and economic inequalities, there were some problems regarding the relationship between the two countries. Due to huge financial flow for infrastructural projects, China not only increased Nigeria's dependence on foreign finance but also foreign technologies. Such problems of debt sustainability, trade imbalance, poor technology transfer and dominance of China in project implementation were of great importance in the studied period. The country mainly exported its raw materials and imported ready-to-use products and machinery from China. This research also highlighted how Chinese investments had, by implication, enabled Nigeria's resource extraction activities through 2018 to 2025. This was because there were improvements in the infrastructure of the country, particularly roads, rail and logistics services, enabling access to communities rich in resources, thus facilitating their transportation and export to China. The mining industry not only increased investments and extraction capabilities, but it also brought with it several environmental and labor issues.

According to the study, it was clear that the activities within the mining industry caused environmental degradation in some of the states under study, especially land destruction, deforestation, pollution of water bodies, and ecological disturbances. The poor environmental laws and regulations have worsened the impact of extractive industries on the mining communities.

In addition to these findings, the report indicated that there was a prevalence of labour and human rights abuses in mining regions. Many mining sites suffered from poor working conditions, lack of exploitation of indigenous laborers, poor occupational safety systems and lack of indigenous representation in technical and managerial positions. Apart from that, the resources of Nigeria were not exploited fully because of the transborder trade of the mineral, understatement of mineral revenues and export of mineral in the unprocessed form.

Therefore, the findings support the second hypothesis which holds that investments made by the Chinese in the mining sector of Nigeria have resulted in resource extraction between 2018 to 2025.

In general, the analysis shows that Chinese investments not only modernized the economy of Nigeria and constructed infrastructure but also helped in making the country externally dependent and extractive.

5.2 Conclusion

It can be observed from the findings of this research that the infrastructural investments made by China in Nigeria from 2018 to 2025 have provided development as well as extractive economic outcomes. In Nigeria, there was a notable improvement in the areas of transportation system, trade links, urban infrastructure and economic activity as a consequence of these Chinese funded projects. These infrastructural developments through rail, road, and airport systems have led to bilateral economic relations and economic development in both countries.

But it can be noticed from the findings that there has not been any significant change in the economic balance in relation to China and Nigeria, which is still quite imbalanced. Through its investments, China had increased the dependency of Nigeria on the external markets of industrial goods, foreign technical equipment and foreign debts. There were certain resonances of resource extraction in the mining sector of Nigeria, including environmental pollution, forced labor, black money, and mining for export of raw materials.

Moreover, through the application of the Debt Trap Theory in the current analysis, it is evident that infrastructure financing can simultaneously be used to promote development and also increase the economic dependency and influence of other countries in certain strategic areas of the developing country. Therefore, even though the Chinese infrastructure investments have had their role in the development of the infrastructure sector in Nigeria, future sustainability of the partnership would mainly depend on capacity building and institution strengthening in Nigeria.

5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations are drawn from the outcomes of the study:

1. The Nigerian government must increase local involvement, technology transfer policies, and industrial capacity building in Chinese-backed infrastructural projects in order to guarantee the sustainable development of both countries through investments in transportation, construction, and trade industries. The recommendation is founded on the evidence that while Chinese investments have increased transportation infrastructure, trade connections, and employment, there has been little local technical involvement and technology transfer.

2. The Nigerian government must implement stringent environmental regulations, mining governance policies, and financial controls in the mining industry to minimize environmental degradation, labor exploitation, illegal mineral exports, and illicit financial flows linked to Chinese-backed extractive processes. The recommendation is derived from the evidence that while Chinese infrastructural investments in the mining sector have promoted resource extraction, it has also raised environmental and human issues between 2018 and 2025.

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