

Nigeria and Japan: A Historical Analysis of Forty-Six Years of Peaceful Relations, 1960-2006

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Abstract

Colonial Nigeria-Japan relations were essentially economic. This was unarguably designed to satisfy the economic well-being of the British colonial government. However after Nigeria's independence other some cultural and political dimensions were added to Nigeria-Japan relations. This paper focuses on the historical development of Nigeria's relations with Japan during the first forty-six years of Nigeria's independence. The paper contends that Nigeria being a less-developed nation has a number of lessons to learn from Japan in her quest for development.

Introduction

International Relations is a 'highly emotionalized form of diplomatic history' (Leach and Abdul: 1970:1). It is an aspect of history that deals with the human activities in which persons from more than one nation, individually and in groups interact. It is concerned with the totality of relations among states, nations and nation states in the international system. It covers all aspects of life- cultural, economic and political. The importance of relations among nations has stimulated my interest in the study of relations between Nigeria, a developing nation and Japan, an industrialized country. A school of thought believes that Nigeria's external relations tend to emphasize on politics to the neglect of the all important economic issues. This school of thought is of the view that the importance and the centrality of economic growth in national development cannot be ignored in Nigeria's relations with other countries of the world (Olusanya and Akindele: 1986). As important as economy is in the relations among states, so also is culture and politics. For instance, cultural and political relations could bring about greater understanding among nations. Therefore this essay will look at the economic, cultural and political dimensions in the relations between the two nations.

It is also generally assumed that the relations between developed and underdeveloped countries are that of unequal partners. This argument has influenced scholars of the dependency school to claim that the study of international economic relations is a study of imperialism and unequal exchange (Nwoke: 1988:1-4). Despite the assumed inequality however, a developing country like Nigeria stands to gain from her relations with the advanced economies of the world. For example, Nigeria could gain a lot from the technological advancement of Japan; also Nigeria can gain by cultivating a good habit of viable economic planning from Japan. This is most essential now especially that Nigeria's industrialization efforts have been import-oriented (Akindele: 1988:85). The writer has used purely historical method to analyze his arguments.

Both countries have distinct principles guiding their relations with foreign partners. Nigeria and Japan like any other country in the world seem to guide these operating principles jealously. There are five operating principles of Nigeria's foreign policy. Like

any other country in the world, the first and foremost is the promotion and protection of the country's national interest. The second operating principle is the legal equality of states. The third is the non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states. The fourth principle is that of membership in key international organizations at both the global and regional levels while the fifth is making Africa the cornerstone and nerve-centre of Nigeria's foreign policy (Olusanya and Akindele, 1986).

Like Nigeria, the foreign policy objective of Japan is based on the fundamental principle of contributing to world peace and prosperity. At the same time Japan has always practiced the maintenance of its own security and well-being in manner consistent with its position as a member of the world and as a country of Asia-Pacific region as an operating principle of her foreign policy. In seeking to play an active role in the maintenance and development of the international order, the tasks for Japanese foreign policy are wide-ranging. Apart from ensuring its own peace and prosperity, Japan takes new initiatives to expand and enhance its official development assistance, and to do more in terms of international cultural exchange (*The Japan of Today*: 1989).

The Evolution of Nigeria-Japan Relations

Before independence in 1960, Nigeria's contact with Japan was insignificant as it was hindered by geographical and political difficulties. Geographically, Japan is very far from Nigeria. Politically, Japanese imperialistic quest did not extend to this part of the world. It was limited to countries in the neighbouring East Asia and the Pacific between 1930 and 1945 (Owoeye, 1986:319-20). During this period, Japan was preoccupied with the annexation of Korea (Mashide and Akio, 1989:29) while European colonial powers were in parts of Asia and Africa. Colonial African territories were in the hands of Germany, Britain, France, Portugal and Italy. Perhaps, the fear of competition with these powers discouraged Japan from Africa.

Due to the Great Depression of the 1930s Britain adopted a tariff policy and abandoned free trade. Subsequently, the British Colonies adopted the Imperial tariff preference code at a meeting in Ottawa, Canada in 1932. This code discriminated against Japanese goods within the British Commonwealth. There was also a British propaganda that Japanese goods were of inferior quality. Because of the British Imperial discriminations and jealousy, Japanese activities in parts of Africa, especially West Africa were greatly reduced. Notwithstanding, there were Japanese goods that found their way into the Nigerian market during this period as a result of some European trading companies. These European companies imported cheap Japanese goods to Nigeria and elsewhere where they sold them for huge profit (Owoeye: 1986).

The British colonial authorities attempted to ban Japan and her goods from entering British sphere of influence in West Africa. However, by the 1950s post war Japan began to operate an independent foreign policy. Thus by 1957, Japan had opened a formal diplomatic relations with Nigeria (Olukoju: 2007; 1999; 1996 and Owoeye: 1986). This was essentially necessary because Japan had to look beyond Asia in her efforts to search for new markets and sources of materials. It was also around this time that there was a

growing quest for Nigeria to diversify her sources of suppliers and markets away from the United Kingdom. This came about because of Nigeria's new political status towards independence and immediately after independence. Japan increasingly began to pose serious challenge to Nigeria's traditional partners-the EEC (EU) and the USA – especially in the export sector of Nigeria's trade (Owoeye: 1986: 320). As a result of this in 1964; Nigeria reciprocated Japan's earlier gesture by opening diplomatic relations with Tokyo (Olukoju: 2007, and London *Business Times* 8 January, 1972: 14).

Nigerian-Japanese Trade Relations

The major aspect of Nigeria-Japan relations is commercial. This according to Bukar Bukarambe (1986) has made the political element in the relations to be very low. In essence, it has been assumed that Japan is not well represented politically in Nigeria and that such smaller market-economy country like Israel and the Newly Industrializing Countries (NICs) have greater political representation in Nigeria. This could however be explained in terms of Japan's perception of herself as a trading nation (Bukarambe: 1988:263-4).

The Nigerian-Japanese trade has always been in favour of Japan. This has caused trade imbalance between the two countries over the years. In 1977 for example, with Japan's purchase of Nigerian crude oil reaching the lowest level, Japan recorded trade surplus with Nigeria. This was ten times larger than that of 1976. (*Japan and Africa*, v.156 Nov-Dec. 1979). While Japan's purchase of Nigeria's crude oil fell substantially, Nigeria's demand for Japanese cars, motorcycles and electric home appliances was on the increase. For instance in 1978, "Japan's exports were 127 times as much as imports. Year by year gains were scored among exports like canned mackerel, industrial machinery, rolling stock and heavy electrical machinery... Japan's imports from Nigeria, declining since 1975, were small due to absence of crude oil since 1977, plus lower cocoa and vegetable oils and fats..." (*Japan and Africa*, v. 156 Nov.-Dec. 1985:4).

From 1960 to 1984, Nigeria only had trade balance with Japan once. This was during the 1973/74 trading year when Nigeria recorded a surplus of N124 million. The balance of trade in favour of Nigeria was a result of the October 1973 Arab- Israeli War which forced Japan to buy more oil from Nigeria. According to the then Federal Commissioner for Trade, Mr. Wenike Briggs, the change in the bilateral trading position was attributable to Nigeria's newly instituted exports of crude oil. This accounted for 90 percent of Nigeria's total Japan-bound shipments over the first months. It was proposed that Japan would increase her purchases of Nigerian traditional goods such as cocoa, cotton, groundnut, palm oil, rubber, timber, tin ore and columbite (*Japan and Africa*, v. 103 October 1974:4). However, the proposal did not materialize as trade imbalance resumed in subsequent years. At the height of the crisis in 1973, Japan secured 1.8 per cent of her petroleum from Nigeria. By 1975, Japan had absorbed the shock of the crisis and later resumed trade with her traditional suppliers. This resulted in the fall in importation from Nigeria which declined to 1.2 per cent. (Owoeye, 1986:328). The trends in the trade between the two countries since independence is shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Nigeria's Trade with Japan 1960 – 1984 (Figures in millions of U.S. Dollars)

YEAR	EXPORTS	IMPORTS	BALANCE
1960	6.9	77.9	-71.0
1961	9.4	85.0	-75.6
1962	4.2	69.6	-65.4
1963	6.7	75.5	-68.8
1964	7.2	86.3	-79.1
1965	8.9	71.7	-62.8
1966	12.1	40.0	-28.0
1967	17.4	52.5	-35.1
1968	10.4	20.0	- 9.6
1969	9.3	26.4	-17.1
1970	111.6	69.2	- 57.6
1971	25.0	128.0	- 103.0
1972	84.0	149.0	-65.0
1973	158.0	172.0	- 14.0
1974	378.0	254.0	+124.0
1975	280.0	595.0	- 315.0
1976	52.0	763.0	-711.0
1977	12.0	1,172.0	- 1,160.0
1978	6.0	1,372.0	- 1,366.0
1979	19.0	1,109.0	- 1,090.0
1980	110.0	1,651.0	- 1,541.0
1981	309.0	2,368.0	- 2,059.0
1982	7.0	1,329.0	- 1,322.0
1983	6.0	626.0	- 620.0
1984	6.0	489.0	- 483.0

Source: IMF, *Direction of Trade*, Various Years.

Various reasons have been put forward for the trade imbalance between Nigeria and Japan. The existence of alternative market in South-East Asia for goods required by Japan is one of the reasons. According to Ogunremi (*National Concord*, 27 July 1992), the problem of distance is another. The Asian countries could produce virtually all what Nigeria produced—crude oil, palm produce, etc. Also these countries are nearer to Japan than Nigeria. The don also suggested that the high cost of Nigerian goods has made it difficult for the products to penetrate the Japanese markets. Lack of awareness of the importers' peculiar needs and the inability of Nigeria to meet the demand and deadline for delivery were some of the problems.

Another factor accounting for the trade imbalance was that Nigeria had little to sell to Japan while Japan had much for Nigerian market. This trend emanated from the high demand for Japanese products by Nigerian businessmen. Such products like electronics, textiles, automobile, bicycles, motorcycles and industrial machinery from Japan were of better quality, more durable and cheaper compared with similar products from other

countries. However, it has been argued that the inability of Nigeria to meet Japan's demand in such items as cotton seeds, groundnuts and other pre-crude oil era products was because Nigeria had to share her exports among older customers in Europe and elsewhere (London *Business Times*, 8 January 1972 and Olukoju: 2007).

The resultant effect of the trade imbalance on Nigeria was adverse. Nigeria's economy and her performance in relations to trade deficit with Japan and other countries gave rise to high indebtedness. It has also given rise to high budget deficits both at the national, state and local government levels. These have contributed to hikes in the rates of inflation and unemployment. Subsequently, Nigeria had experienced immense frustration in her trade with Japan. A good example of the expression of such frustration was the one made by the late sage, Chief Obafemi Awolowo (*Daily Sketch*, 16 December 1983).

“Unless the Asiatic countries undertake right now to buy from us equivalent value of goods in return for what we buy from them, our national interests dictates we should stop forthwith, buying from them. Over the years, our trade with Asia has been profitless adventure. It has now reached a disaster pit. The latest available figures show that in our trade with them in 1980 we had a deficit of N1.6 billion. Of all the Asiatic countries, Japan is the chief culprit in this matter. We cannot afford to go on year in year out to lose money to a very rich-almost over-rich county like Japan. We must insist on equitable trade with all our overseas customers.”

Many factors have been adduced for trade imbalance between Nigeria and Japan. But while one may accept the argument that the high price of commodities and availability of alternative sources made import from Nigeria unattractive, the question of distance is unconvincing. After all, the distance did not affect Nigeria's import from Japan but why the other way round?

Japan adopted an export oriented approach to its foreign economic relations. She maintained a greatly undervalued currency, restricted imports, stimulated home production and undertook vigorous export promotion drives. The success of this policy had enabled her to enjoy a balance of trade surplus which had also helped to finance her enormous import bills mainly for raw materials. Nigeria, unlike Japan possessed large arable land area as well as abundant supply of raw materials including the highly priced energy resource-petroleum. Nigeria's international trade was characterised by the export of raw materials mainly and importation of manufactured goods (Owoeye, 1986:320 and Bukarambe, 1988: 266). The structural differences between Japan and Nigeria point to the existence of a high degree of commodity complementarities between the two economies. What Japan lacked but needed was possessed in large quantities in Nigeria and vice-versa. Since Nigeria became a significant exporter of oil in the 1970s, Japan had been a very reluctant customer. The reason often put forward as enumerated above was distance. With exception of the N148.5 million purchases of 1981, Japan had not been buying much oil from Nigerian since 1977 (Owoeye: 1986).

The question of oil purchase by Japan from Nigeria has pointed to two things here. The first is that while Nigeria was hampered by her undiversified economy, Japan continued to enjoy the sale of her attractive products. Apart from oil and gas, Nigeria's other minerals include tin, columbite, coal and limestone but none of these were exported in large quantities. Therefore going by comparative structure of the economy, Nigeria was not competitive enough. This could explain why Nigerian-Japanese trade relations remained unbalanced. (Bukarambe: 1988). Nevertheless, despite all these the fact still remained that Japan has emerged as a very important supplier of finished products to Nigeria. It is observed that Japan is Nigeria's largest source for the importation of automobile and electronic equipment in sub-Saharan Africa at least. The reputation enjoyed by Japanese goods in Nigeria was due largely to the quality and durability of Japanese goods (Owoeye: 1986: 322).

The trade imbalance between Nigeria and Japan has given rise to the adoption of some measures by successive governments in Nigeria. The first of such measures to redress the situation was 'moral suasion'. Several appeals were made to Japan at various levels to increase her import of Nigerian goods so as to rectify the imbalance. The Prime Minister of Nigeria, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa expressed his dissatisfaction with the lopsided pattern of trade between the two countries on the occasion of the presentation of credentials of Mr. Kazuo Futamata, Japanese Ambassador to Nigeria in 1965. Nigeria also tried to apply sanctions on Japan to correct the trade imbalance. Also there was the imposition of differential tariff quota systems and the invocation of the GATT Article 35 on Japanese goods. The first in the series of retaliatory measures came up in 1963 when the Balewa Government placed restrictions on the importation of textiles from Japan. In 1965, restrictions were extended to all goods, except textiles (Owoeye: 1986).

The reaction of the Japanese Government to the trade embargo placed on her goods by Nigeria was the announcement of 10 million pounds grant for Nigeria (Olukoju: 2007; Owoeye: 1986). The credit according to them was to compensate Nigeria for the losses she suffered in the trade imbalance between them. The acceptance of the loan attracted a mixed feeling both in the private and public circles in Nigeria. The Federal Government expressed doubts as to how the trade imbalance could be corrected by the offer of a loan. This made the Japanese Government to send a 15-man delegation to Nigeria in 1967 to come and explain the rationale behind Japan's offer of the controversial 10 million pound loan. As a measure to improve the trade relations, the delegation also promised to launch a campaign to increase imports of Nigeria's cocoa, groundnuts, cotton and crude oil (Owoeye: 1986,). The Japanese Government also suggested the arrangement for an exhibition of Nigerian products in Japan. This measure according to the Japanese Government was a step forward in solving the imbalance of trade between the two countries (Embassy of Japan, Lagos).

In response to the trade embargo imposed by Nigeria on Japanese goods, there was the launching of a programme in Japan in 1966 which Japanese officials believed would increase Japan's imports from Nigeria. The programme entailed that all Japanese products to Nigeria were to be placed under a control system. The exports would in essence require government approval before they can be forwarded. The measure was to

reduce Japanese exports to Nigeria and increase Nigeria's export to Japan. The programme was carried out by the Japanese Government in collaboration with some trade firms under the auspices of the Japanese MITI (Ministry of International Trade and Industry) (Owoeye: 1986), now METI (Ministry of External Trade and Industry) (Olukoju: 2007).

As a result of this response from Japan, the Nigerian Government decided to relax the restriction imposed on Japanese goods. Thus the restriction placed on the importation of machinery, spare parts and raw materials from Japan was lifted. However, not long after the drama of trade restrictions, the trade disequilibrium between the two countries resumed. In the trading year of 1971 for example, Nigeria recorded a staggering N36.7 million deficit in her trade with Japan. The lopsided trade pattern was maintained till 1973 when Nigeria recorded her first remarkable surplus in trade with Japan. The improvement in balance of trade between Nigeria and Japan in 1973/74 trading year persuaded the Gowon Government to lift the trade embargo on Japanese goods. Despite the attempt to improve trade between them however, the imbalance persisted and even worsened thereafter. For instance, Nigeria recorded the worst trade imbalance with Japan in 1981 when the deficit ran into more than N2 billion.

Activities of Japanese Companies in Nigeria

One of the measures adopted by the Japanese Government to correct the trade imbalance between her and Nigeria was the "local manufacturing" of those commodities that were being heavily imported to Nigeria from Japan by the Japanese companies alone or in collaboration with state and private firms (Olukoju: 2007). The initiative increased the activities of the existing and new Japanese companies in Nigeria.. Today, there are many Japanese firms in Nigeria. They engage in manufacturing, construction engineering, shipping, banking, insurance and fishery (Bukarambe: 1988:267). Some of the Japanese companies in partnership with Nigerian interest are listed in Table II below.

Table II: Some Japanese Companies and their area of activities in Nigeria

S/N	COMPANY	LOCATION	ACTIVITIES
1.	Arewa Textiles (Nig.) Ltd.	Kaduna	Manufacturing: Ankara cotton Fabric.
2.	Continental Iron and Steel Co. (Nig.) Ltd.	Ikeja (Lagos)	Manufacturing: Iron rods and steel products.
3.	Galvanizing Industries Ltd.	Ikeja (Lagos)	Manufacturing: Corrugated roofing sheets and rods.
4.	Pioneer Metal Products Co. (Ltd.)	Ikeja (Lagos)	Manufacturing: Galvanized roofing sheets.
5.	Nigeria Teijin Textiles Ltd.	Ikeja (Lagos)	Manufacturing: Woollen and terelyn fabrics.
6.	Ninetco Ltd.	Ikeja (Lagos)	Manufacturing: Fishing nets.
7.	Northern Textiles Ltd.	Kano	Manufacturing: Blankets
8.	Nigerian Wire and Cable Co. Ltd.	Ibadan	Manufacturing: Wires and cables
9.	Metal Box Toyo Glass	Agbara (Lagos)	Manufacturing: Bottles

	(Nig.) Ltd.		
10.	Delta Freeze Ltd.	Ilupeju (Lagos)	Manufacturing: Air-conditioners
11.	Telex Electronics Ltd.	Ilupeju (Lagos)	Manufacturing: Radio, television sets
12.	Nigeria Surgical Products Ltd.	Kaduna	Manufacturing: Medical products bandages, plasters, cotton-wool
13.	Zaria Industries Ltd.	Zaria	Manufacturing: Tarpaulin vinylon fabric.
14.	Bhojsons Industries Ltd.	Ilupeju (Lagos)	Manufacturing: Cotton materials
15.	Synthetic Textiles Ltd.	Ikeja (Lagos)	Manufacturing: Synthetic fibres.
16.	Afriprint Ltd.	Isole (Lagos)	Manufacturing: Ankara cotton fabrics
17.	Nigeria Wire Industries	Ikeja (Lagos)	Manufacturing: Chain link fencing welded reinforced mesh, barbed wire, nails.
18.	Nigerian Electronics Company	Surulere (Lagos)	Manufacturing: Television sets, radio, fans, public address equipment
19.	Honda manufacturing Nig. Ltd.	Ota (Ogun State)	Manufacturing: Motor cycles.
20.	Taisei West Africa Ltd. (TWA)	Lagos	Construction: Building, civil engineering

Source: *Japan and Africa*, Bulletin of Anglo-Japanese Economic Institute (London) (Several years)

Japanese construction companies have handled some of the most important Federal and State government projects in Nigeria. For example, Japanese Construction firms such as Chiyoda and Marubeni have won many multi-million dollar turnkey projects in Nigeria in the past years (*Business Concord*, 28 February 1979). Some of the most important contracts handled by Japanese companies in Nigeria included: Katsina Steel Rolling Company (1979), Anambra River Irrigation (1980), NNPC Fourth Oil Refinery, Port Harcourt (1985), the First Phase of the Petrochemical Company in Kaduna (1985) and the construction of the Gas Turbine electric power plant in the Niger Delta.

Apart from relations at the governmental level, private operators in both countries have contributed their own quota to the bilateral relations by forming the Nigeria-Japan Associations. The Japanese formed their own thirty years earlier while the Nigerian body was formed in 1989. Relations between these bodies went sour during the crisis that followed the annulment of the June 12, 1993 Presidential election. The crisis in addition to the bad years of General Sanni Abacha administration also led to the scaling down of the activities of the Japanese companies in Nigeria. The return to civil rule in 1999 however restored the relations to the level it was before 1993 (Olukoju: 2007),

Nigeria's trade with Japan requires special attention. This is because of the degree of trade imbalance which calls for urgent measure to redress the situation. Redressing the situation would also go a long way in improving our country's economy. For example,

figures have shown that outside South Africa, Nigeria is the most important destination for Japanese consumer durables especially electrical goods and automobiles (*Sunday Concord*, 8 February 1987 and Olukoju: 2007).

The essay has discussed the growth of Nigeria-Japan trade relations, the trade imbalance and the activities of Japanese companies in Nigeria. The essay will proceed with a discussion on Japanese grants, foreign technical aid and assistance to Nigeria.

Japanese Grants, Technical Aid and Assistance to Nigeria

The institution of the Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) programme and foreign aid became a priority in the Japanese foreign policy after the Second World War. Japanese foreign aid was different from those of the Western European countries or the United States because it was not used to retain stronghold on former colonies, compelled by humanitarian considerations or aimed at pursuing strategic or ideological goals. But the Japanese foreign aid came up as a result of the astronomical growth of its economy in the 1950s and 1960s which as well made it possible to pursue its foreign policy goals without the use of military force as a global economic super-power. (Eyinla: 1999 and Olukoju: 2007). Japan's aid policy had sought to mend relations with her Asian neighbours as well as promoting friendly relations with other nations of the world. This made Japan to participate in the 1954 Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic and Social Development in Asia and the Pacific. The Colombo Plan kick-started the Japanese foreign aid policy (Adeleke: 2002).

There are four major components of Japan's ODA: ODA takes the form of loans, bilateral grants, contributions to international organizations and technical aid. While grant aid takes the form of direct assistance in cash, general grant aid covers various activities like education, health, communication, agriculture and public welfare. Technical aid has to do with technology transfer and the exchange of personnel aimed at capacity building in the recipient countries. ODA or Yen loans are given on long-term, low-interest basis and are refundable by the recipient nations unlike grants. It has been argued that Japan's contributions to multilateral organizations to facilitate development projects in the less developed countries is the least contentious and most unobtrusive of its aid programmes. (Eyinla: 1999 and Olukoju: 2007).

Under Japan's programme of economic and technical cooperation with Africa, the trans-African highway-plan was the most important in the 1970s. The multi-million naira project covering 4,000 miles road network was proposed to run from Mombasa in Kenya through Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Central Africa Republic, and Cameroon, to terminate in Lagos, Nigeria. The Japanese Government realized the importance of the project as they believed that it would not only serve as a unifying factor for African States, it would also strengthen inter-state economic ties between them. (*Japan and Africa*, v.62 May 1971). The project did not take off eventually perhaps because of loss of interest by the Japanese authorities.

It has been observed that Japanese foreign aid and investment have increased considerably. Her aid in medical field to African nations for example was very

important. In a bid to eradicate river blindness in Africa, for instance, the World Bank in 1974 called on advanced nations to finance a U.S. \$50 million fund set up to tackle the problem. In response to the appeal, Japan contributed U.S. \$500,000 in 1975 to help stamp out the parasitic encephalitis eye disease in Africa (*Japan and Africa*, v.112 May 1975). Other technical aid and assistance which had been given to Africa included food aid to drought infested areas of Africa. The Japanese government donated U.S. \$930,000 to alleviate the effects of drought in Sahel Africa in June 1973. The aid scheme grew to U.S. \$1,800,000 in 1974 (*Japan and Africa*, v. 97 April 1974).

Before 1981, Nigeria was not qualified for Japanese aid because Nigeria was considered a rich-developing country. However, Nigeria received her first grant amounting to ₦500 million in 1981. Even then Nigeria had been benefiting from Japanese loans before this time. In 1966 Nigeria got 10.80 million Japanese Yen for various projects. The second credit facility worth ₦6.20 million was granted to Nigeria in 1974 for the purchase of 200 coaches for Nigerian Railway Corporation (Ekpe: 1990: 43). Nigeria also involved Japan in the industrial development of the country; this might be one of Nigeria's efforts at benefiting from the rapid industrialization of Japan in major industrial projects. In 1971 for instance, the Nigerian government proposed to establish a fertilizer factory and the government sought Japanese assistance towards the implementation of the project (*Japan and Africa*, vol. 69 December, 1971).

The trend in technical cooperation between the two countries continued in 1986 with the formation of a joint committee to draw up an agenda of cooperation for the re-forestation of the semi-arid areas of Nigeria. The programme was spearheaded by Japan International Cooperative Agency (JICA). Under the scheme, the Japanese Agency was expected to provide the expertise to the Ministry of Science and Technology through the Forest Research Institute of Nigeria (Federal Ministry of Information, Lagos, April 2 1986). The aim was to assist Nigeria to arrest the alarming rate of desert encroachment in Nigeria and Africa in general. In pursuance of the scheme, Japan sent a delegation to some African Countries including Nigeria in 1988 under the banner of Green Sahel '88'. About 690 hectares of land were planted during the 5-year exercise. Some 25 hectares were planted in 1987 and another 240 hectares in 1988 (*The Democrat*, July 1, 1988).

Also, Japanese assistance to Nigeria took humanitarian dimensions. This started during the Nigerian Civil War. For instance, in May 1970, 500 tons of rice and ten 5-truck vehicles came from the Japanese Government (*Japan and Africa*, v. 50 May 1970). Also in 1970, another 8 Toyota Crown ambulances were donated to Nigeria by the Japanese Red Cross Society (*Japan and Africa*, v. 55 October 1970). In 1971, the Japanese owned Teijin Nigeria Limited donated a quantity of clothing materials to the National Rehabilitation Commission. These were meant for the reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in the war affected parts of Nigeria (*Japan and Africa*, v.58 January 1971).

In December 1986, another agreement was signed between the Japanese Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. Mitsuro Donowaki and the Nigerian External Affairs Minister, Professor Bolaji Akinyemi. The grant, totaling ₦26.6 million was to improve the facilities of the Nigerian Institute of Oceanography and Marine Research (NIOMR) Lagos. Part of the

grant was also used for the procurement of agricultural machinery and fertilizer under the country's National Rice Programme (Federal Ministry of Information and Culture, 1986). The National Rice Programme was designed to cover the production of 14,000 hectares of rice fields in 14 states of Nigeria (*The Guardian*, 1986).

Apart from agricultural aid and assistance; Japan has extended other forms of loans and grants toward infrastructural and educational development in Nigeria. For instance, the establishment of the Department of Petroleum Engineering at the University of Ibadan was financed from a U.S. \$3.2 million grant by three Japanese oil companies in the 1970's. These were Mitsui Oil Exploration, Teikoku Oil, and Teijin Ltd. Also, the modernization and expansion of fishing ports in Nigeria benefited from the grant (*Japan and Africa v. 59* February 1971). The Japanese companies also made available U.S. \$555,000 to promote education in Nigeria in 1971/72 financial year (*Japan and Africa v. 59* November 1972). Also in March 1972, members of Japanese Government delegation visited the University of Ife (Now Obafemi Awolowo University) to look into possible areas of cooperation and assistance to the University's newly established Faculty of Health Sciences (*Japan and Africa v. 22* March 1971).

Apart from credit loans and grant aid facilities, Japan has continued to contribute significantly to Nigeria's manpower development. The Association for Overseas Technical Scholarship (AOTS), a non-profit organization was established in 1959 under Japan's Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI). The main objective of the organization was to promote technical cooperation for the industrialization and the development of developing countries. The organization trained over 400 Nigerian technicians between 1959 and 1986. Similarly, many senior officials from various Federal and State Institutions and Ministries have benefited from training under the Japan International cooperation Agency's manpower Development scheme from developing countries (*Nigeria: A New Dimension*: 1989). Japanese Government made available a total aid grant of more than U.S. \$10.87 million to the Nigeria Institute of Oceanography and Marine Research, Lagos between 1981 and 1988 (*Daily Times*, 30 March 1988). Also audio-visual aids equipments worth N5.8 million were presented by Japan to the Centre for Management Development (CMD) in Lagos in 1988. This, according to the Japanese Embassy in Lagos, was to enhance managerial skill and productivity in Nigeria (Punch, 12 December 1988).

Japan has also assisted Nigeria in the area of medical rehabilitation. A technical cooperation project for medical research and development was signed between Nigeria and Japan in 1982. Three Japanese experts served the University of Jos from October 1982 under the technical agreement. The first donation of medical equipment of Y40, 405, 794 (about N110, 000) was made in September 1983. The project was accelerated with the donation of laboratory equipment and materials for medical research worth Y26, 684, 507 (about N800, 000). The number of Japanese experts working on the project at the University of Jos increased to four in 1984 (*Daily Times*, 15 June 1984). In the efforts of the Federal Government of Nigeria at controlling the yellow fever epidemic, Japan has played a very vital role. For example in 1987, Nigeria received a U.S. \$200, 000 grant from the Japanese Government for the purchase of about 700,000 doses of Yellow Fever

Vaccine. The then Minister of Health, Professor Olikoye Ransome Kuti; emphasised that Japan was the first country to respond to the campaign against yellow fever (Ministry of Information and Culture, Lagos, 24 June 1987).

Japanese Government assistance towards Nigerian economic recovery started from the 1970s. To correct the trade imbalance between them, Japanese industrialists have been making concerted efforts to manufacture locally those commodities that were hitherto imported into the country from Japan (London *Business Times*, 8 January 1974 and Olukoju: 2007). A grand purpose grant of U.S. \$23.4 million was extended to Nigeria during the visit of the Foreign Minister, Major General Ike Nwachukwu to Japan in 1988. The grant was Nigeria's share of Japan's special U.S \$500 million grant to sub-Sahara African countries over three years (1987 – 1989). The amount was to help the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) introduced by the Babangida Administration to rejuvenate the economy. Japan like other Nigeria's trading partners and creditors believed that SAP was invaluable to long term economic recovery of Nigeria and a prerequisite for the payment of her huge debts. (*The Guardian*, 1988).

In pursuance of Japan's support for SAP in Nigeria, Japanese Government sent an economic mission to Nigeria in November 1988 to assess Nigeria's progress in SAP (*The Guardian*, 7 November 1988). The Japanese loan in support of SAP in Nigeria for 1989 amounted to U.S. \$200 million. The loan was provided by the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund under the finance recycling scheme of the Japanese Government (Federal Ministry of Information and Culture, Lagos, 10 March 1989). To further pursue her support for Nigeria's economic recovery, Japan donated a sum of (Y2.5 billion) to the Federal Government in 1990. This was in form of a non-project type UN-tied grant-in-aid. Part of the grant was used for mitigating some of Nigeria's economic difficulties and for servicing the country's foreign debts. Also an additional sum of N155.6 million grant-in-aid was given to Nigeria in 1991 (*Nigerian Tribune*, 14 March 1990).

Political and Cultural Dimensions of Nigeria- Japan Relations

It has often been said that the political and cultural dimension of Nigeria-Japan relations was unusual. This was because of the prominence of trade and low political element in the relations between the two countries (Bukarambe: 1988:263). However it should be noted that international cultural relations is as old as any other relations between states and as old as civilization itself. International cultural relations did not begin to be integrated into the foreign policy of the states until the late nineteenth century. Its integration into states foreign policy was as a consequence of the development of the nation states in Europe (Harnold: 1979: 13). Nowadays, there has grown an ever-increasing awareness of the need to strengthen the direct influence of politics on foreign cultural relations. The numerous international cultural organizations which have UNESCO as their cultural cleaning house have undoubtedly achieved considerable foreign political importance. There was a sudden change of attitude of the various governments in the world with regard to active participation in cultural relations. This was because of the advancement of science, democracy and education which had accompanied the Industrial Revolution (Harnold: 1979: 18).

The existing pattern of relations between Nigeria and Japan was largely defined by Japan's industrial development (UNESCO: *World Communication: 1956*). According to Bukarambe (1988), the only explanation to that effect may be Japan's perception of herself as a trading nation. Perhaps, this development has made Nigeria's relations with Japan to be stark culturally and politically from the beginning. Between Nigeria and Japan there was the lack of the almost customary colonial, historical and political (i.e. ideological) garb that familiarly dressed up Nigeria's relations with other industrial states of the world. Japan is Asiatic, geographically and culturally distant and an industrial power in search of markets and raw materials. Nigeria is an African and developing country, an exporter of raw materials but has a potential market for industrial goods. These differences have led to the argument that Japan has no accompanying political role in Nigeria (Bukarambe: 1988). Nevertheless, Japan had often endeavored to strengthen relations with African states. It has always been the observation of Japanese diplomats stationed in Africa that for Japan to strengthen her political tie with Africa, infrastructural amenities have to be sponsored by her through the African Development Bank (*Japan and Africa* v. 56 November 1970).

Since 1957, when Japan opened formal diplomatic relations with Nigeria, there has been a regular exchange of ambassadors and other officials between the two countries. It is also very interesting to note that during the Nigerian Civil war, Japan supported the Federal Military Government as she opposed the disintegration of Nigeria as a Federation (*Japan and Africa*). There has also been frequent exchange of visits at the governmental level by Nigerian and Japanese policy makers in the history of their relations. For instance, in 1974, the Japanese Foreign minister, Toshio Kimura paid a visit to Nigeria. He was the first Japanese Foreign Minister to do so. Also in 1979 the Japanese Foreign Minister, Mr. Sunao Sonada paid a two-day official visit to Nigeria as a guest of the Federal Military Government. The visit provided the opportunity for both countries to discuss matters of mutual interest between them (*Japan and Africa: v.104* November/December 1974). Nigeria has over the years also sent high power delegations to Tokyo for bilateral talks. In January 1976, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Industries, Ahmed Joda went on a ten-day visit to Japan as a guest of the Japanese Foreign Ministry. The visit afforded the Secretary to hold talks with Japanese Government officials and businessmen on ways of increasing the volume of trade between them (Federal Ministry of Information, Lagos, 19 July 1979).

In the late 1970s Nigeria proposed to build a high – speed trunk railway like that of Japanese Shinkansen “bullet-train” service. The proposal took the Nigerian Transport Commissioner, Colonel M. Magoro to Japan in 1976. In Japan, Colonel Magoro met the Japanese Foreign Minister, Kiichi Miyazawa and Transport Minister Matsuro Kimura on the proposed project (*Japan and Africa: v.118* January 1976). In 1983, the Nigerian Foreign Minister, Ishaya Adu visited Tokyo to seek Japanese economic aid for Nigeria's agricultural development. The visit also enabled the minister to reach an agreement on Japanese assistance towards the construction of liquefied petroleum gas facilities and oil cracking plants in Nigeria (*Japan and Africa: v.124* July 1976). In October 1988, the minister of External Affairs, Major General Ike Nwachukwu paid a 5-day official visit to Tokyo at the invitation of the Japanese Government. During the visit, the minister and

members of his entourage held discussions with Japanese senior government officials as well as members of the organized private sector. The visit enabled the two countries to review their relations and also enabled Japan to grant a loan of 3 billion Japanese yen to Nigeria. General Nwachukwu's visit helped to strengthen relations between the two countries. It was a successful visit in view of Nigeria's emphasis on economic diplomacy (*Nigeria: A New Direction*, Ministry of External Affairs, 1989).

Perhaps one of the most important events in the history of Nigerian – Japanese relations was the 5-day official visit to Japan by President Ibrahim Babangida in February 1989. It was the President's visit to Japan on the occasion of the burial of Emperor Hirohito of Japan. President Babangida's visit was significant in the relations between the two countries in three major ways: First, the visit pointed out that Nigeria had finally realized that every opportunity should be used to promote her economic goals. The Presidential visit was significant in view of the fact that such can be used to cement the socioeconomic and cultural links existing between the two countries. Second, there was the need to reduce the yawning gap in the balance of trade between Nigeria and Japan. Third, there was also the need for the President to solicit for Japan's diplomatic and financial support in rescheduling Nigeria's then U.S. \$9 billion debt at the talk scheduled to hold in London with the Paris Club of Western creditor nations the following month (*The Guardian*, 23 February 1989).

Another importance of President Babangida's visit to Japan in Nigeria's foreign policy was the chance it created for Nigeria to exert her influence on the Middle East affairs. The visit afforded the president the opportunity to meet with his Israeli counterpart, Clarm Hergog in Tokyo. President Babangida made it clear to his Israeli counterpart that Nigeria would not alter her position on the Middle East issue unless Israel recognized the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the rights of the Palestinians (*The Guardian* 23 February 1989)

Japan is culturally different from Africa, nevertheless over the years efforts have been made to promote cultural relations between her and African countries. According to Ade Adefuye (1992:3), culture itself is a complex phenomenon. It is the sum total of a people's way of life and consists of values, beliefs and perceptions of the world that underlie the behaviour of the people. Culture is shared by a particular society and it is that aspect of people's existence that makes them similar or different all over the world.

The first effort at promoting cultural relations between Nigeria and Japan was the participation of Nigeria in Japan World Exposition (Expo'70) which took place in Osaka in 1970. Expo'70 was the first universal and international trade exhibition ever to be held in Asia. Over 70 countries including ten African nations participated. The occasion presented Nigeria an opportunity to expose her wealth of ornaments. These included historic wooden and ivory sculptures, beautifully designed calabashes, decorative gourds and fanciful leather wares. Other works of arts from Nigeria on exhibition were artists' impressions of animals' life carved from wood and bones and a variety of colourful earthenware. The exposition also gave Nigeria an added advantage of parading her economic potentialities to the rest of the world. Nigeria was able to convince prospective

investors and customers that despite the ravages of the Civil War that had just ended, her economy was still buoyant. Nigerian traditional commodities like crustaceans and mollusks, cocoa, groundnuts, cotton seeds and raw cotton, crude rubber and rubber crepe were displayed at the Nigerian pavilion (Nigeria-Japan Economic Newsletter, September 1969: 2-4).

Almost twenty years after Expo 70, an exhibition basically organized for Nigeria took place in Japan. In 1989, the exhibition of Nigerian arts and culture titled 2000 years of Nigerian Arts ran for 6 months in Japan. The exhibition was witnessed by over 50,000 Japanese visitors. The 140 items comprising Nigerian works of art and artifacts used during the exhibition came back to Nigeria in January 1990. The exhibition marked a step further in the cultural relations between the peoples of both countries. Nigeria has been a beneficiary of many cultural grants-in-aid from Japan. The purpose of such grants was to promote the cultural relations between the two countries. The first of such agreement was reached between the two countries in 1983. Under the agreement, Japan donated 861 sets of microscopes to Nigerian Secondary Schools. Also in 1987, Japan showed a continuous interest in the activities of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments when a cultural grant-in-aid agreement was reached in Lagos. The agreement was signed by the Minister of Information and Culture, Prince Tony Momoh and the Japanese Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. Mitsuro Donowaki. Under the agreement Japan donated equipment worth N800, 000 for the preservation and recording of cultural assets (Federal Ministry of Information and Culture, Lagos, 27 February 1990).

To further promote cultural exchange between the two countries, the Japanese Ambassador in Nigeria, Mr. Yasushi Kurokochi announced the donation of lighting equipment to the National Theatre and a Language Laboratory for the University of Lagos in February 1990 (Federal Ministry of Information and Culture, Lagos, 27 February 1990). Also in 1992, Japan donated a number of books to the University of Lagos library. The books were donated to the University under the Japan Foundation's library support programme. Areas covered by the books included geography, history, politics, economics, encyclopedia and laws of Japan (*The Guardian*, 6 February 1992). Similar donation of books has been made to the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), Lagos and many other institutions across Nigeria by Japan Foundation of Tokyo in recent years.

The area of music and entertainment was another aspect of cultural relations between the two countries. Some Nigerian popular musicians have performed in Japan. The first of such was Victor Uwaifo and his Akwete band who were invited to represent Nigeria at the EXPO '70 (Japan and Africa: v. 51 June 1970). During the "Africa Week" hosted by Japan in 1984 different social and cultural aspects of the African life featured. King Sunny Ade of Nigeria was one of the artistes invited to perform in Japan (*Daily Times*: 3 August 1984). King Sunny Ade performed both in Osaka and Tokyo. (*Nigerian Statesman*, 29 October 1984).

In the early part of 1991, the National Troupe of Nigeria was invited by the Japanese Government. The troupe's visit to Japan afforded them opportunity to interact with other

artistes from Japan and also learn from Japanese culture. In the same year, the Kogo Drummers from Japan performed in various parts of Nigeria including Lagos. The group's visit to Nigeria enabled them to see more of Nigerian culture. Before the end of 1991, a group of visiting Japanese artistes led by Mr. Motohiko Tsutsura came to Nigeria. Apart from music and entertainment, since EXPO'70 Japan has been making concerted efforts at making her culture accessible to Nigerians at home. This basically started in 1971 when there was an exhibition of the Japanese craft of intricacies of flower arrangement in Lagos. The craft is one of Japan's most distinctive traditional art-forms. It was sponsored by the Japanese Information Centre in Lagos. In December 1971, there was a display of the traditional Japanese art of paper folding (origami) organized by the Japanese Embassy in Lagos. In the 1980's there were no significant Japanese cultural display in Nigeria until 1991 when an exhibition of Japanese dolls was held at the gallery of crafts and designs of the National Arts Theatre in Lagos. The exhibition was a display of different Japanese achievers, (heroes and heroines) as immortalized in the Japanese legends and folklore (Federal Ministry of Information, Lagos, 5 November 1991).

Between 1986 and 2006, it has been observed that the Japanese Embassy in Nigeria continued to carry out the exhibitions of some aspects of Japanese culture in some locations around Nigeria. According to Ayodeji Olukoju (2007), there was an abrupt cessation of cultural exchange activities between 1993 and 1996 because of the worst atrocities of the Abacha years when Nigeria became a pariah state in the comity of nations. He argued that the resumption of activities after a three-year break suggested that the Japanese considered that the situation had improved or that such activities should be resumed for strategic reasons while others remained suspended. (Olukoju: 2007).

Cultural relations should not be used merely as a tool of political and economic policy. If this happened, the essential purposes of cultural programme would be defeated. Rather cultural programme should be used to advance the security of a people directly, i.e., by directing them toward stimulating free cultural development on the international level (Thomson and Laves: 1969:43). Therefore the relationship between culture and foreign policy of a country should not be over – emphasized. Each country has its own distinctive traditions, social and intellectual orientations. There is a fundamental relationship between a country's cultural system and its behaviour in the international system. To understand the diplomacy of a country, something must be known about its culture (Adefuye: 1992:3). In international politics, Japan and Nigeria share some fundamental differences. Africa is the cornerstone and nerve-centre of Nigeria's foreign policy. Japan on the other hand is Asia-centered and conducts her foreign policy in a manner consistent with its position as a country in the Asia Pacific region. Nevertheless, in spite of the Afro-centricity of Nigerian foreign policy, she is not culturally biased towards any country. Japan seems to be culturally far away from Africa and perhaps negative toward African culture. A good case in point was a statement made by the Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yasuhiro Nakasone in 1986 regarding the intelligence quotients of Blacks and Hispanic vis-à-vis whites in the United States. Mr. Nakasone's apology notwithstanding, it must be stressed that the statement went beyond Blacks in the U.S.A., it encompassed all Blacks of the world (Adefuye: 1992).

A snag in Nigeria – Japan relations was the fact that Japan did a lot of business with Apartheid South Africa. Although Japan did not exchange ambassadors with South Africa, trade between them surpassed that of any other African country (Olusanya and Akindele: 1986: 4-5). Before the pressure from Nigeria and the international community forced the apartheid regime of South Africa to organize a multi-racial democratic election in April 1994, Japan had never registered a strong protest voice against apartheid and racism. It has been suggested that perhaps, Japan being a one race nation did not understand the full implication of racial discrimination (*The Guardian*: 16 October 1986). Japan could strengthen her political and cultural relations with Africa by sponsoring more Afro-centric programmes in her foreign policy. This is very important for two major reasons: First, Japan could be a source of maintenance of peace and equilibrium in the world. Also, Japan has an important mission to act as a bridge between the North and South in order to enhance international cooperation (*New Nigeria*: 22 November 1980).

Conclusion

Nigeria had a healthy relations with Japan during the period under study although there were occasional disagreements caused by trade imbalance between them. Available evidence reveals trade imbalance between the two since independence. The value of Nigeria's exports has been largely responsible for the imbalance. Whereas Nigeria exports agricultural commodities which are available from other sources, Nigeria imports electrical appliances and motor vehicles from Japan among others. The attitude of Nigeria and Japan to the trade between them may be explained by the difference in its relative importance to each country. The trade with Japan is of considerable significance to Nigeria. It accounts for a fairly large share of her imports. But Nigeria accounts for a relatively small proportion of Japan's total trade.

The Colonial structure of Nigerian economy has not changed. The institutional and structural foundation of colonial economy is still present in Nigeria. The problem is at the level of production not exchange. Nigeria is yet to be economically independent and Japan is technologically more advanced. This has made it increasingly difficult for Nigeria to compel Japan to change her trade policy. Nevertheless the Nigerian market is the largest in Africa and in terms of potentials, it is of considerable importance to Japan. Japan could not afford to forfeit her Nigerian market if she has to think of her future economy. It is important to stress here also that as long as Nigeria remains a producer of primary commodities, the problem of trade imbalance with industrialized countries may remain. Although Japan has increased economic assistance to Nigeria, it is by no means adequate. Japan being a member of Group of seven (G-7) is in position to increase industrial loans and grants to Nigeria. (Adefuye: 1994). It is also suggested that the trans-African highways proposed by Japan in the 1970s should be revisited. This would help in accelerating economic development in Africa South of the Sahara (*Japan and Africa v.* 90 September 1973).

It is my considered opinion that Japanese auto industries like Toyota, Nissan, Hino and Mitsubishi should revisit their proposal to build assembling plants in Nigeria. For a country like Nigeria which is in dire need of training, the assistance of Japan cannot be over-emphasized. Japan can also increase technical assistance to Nigeria by setting up a

research centre in appropriate technology, particularly in the field of electronics and computer. There is also the need for Japan to increase the number of Nigerian students being trained in Japan under its Official Development Assistance (ODA).

In order to make 'transfer of technology' possible in Nigeria, 'copy technology' is not the best answer. However, Nigeria could imitate Japanese technology based on improved engineering. (*The Guardian*: 9 November 1991) In essence, there is the need to look inward rather than depend on Japan for most of our technological needs. This could be achieved through adaptation of Japan's technology to suit Nigerian raw materials (*National Concord*: 27 July 1991). In imitating Japanese technology, Nigeria has a number of lessons to learn. Japan started her major developmental experience in the mid-18th century when she imported Western Capitalist technology. The initial results developed into the genesis of her engineering expertise and the architect of the most advanced weaving machinery in the world. . Thus she initiated an impressive economic liberalization policy. This necessitated further hiring of foreign experts to help mend and nurture some of her imported ideologies. Also, Japan sent out her citizens in large numbers to the West to learn. Nigeria can do the same to ensure a meaningful economic and technological development (*National Concord*: 4 December 1991).

In their efforts at nation building, it has been observed that Japanese were most patriotic and nationalistic. Nigerians should learn from the Japanese long experience of democratic practices. Japan's trials and errors in development is a good lesson for Nigeria. The realistic approach and sincerity with which the Japanese Government and entrepreneurs alike pursued the course of development is highly emulative. In contrast, more attention is paid to power struggle in Africa. This has masterminded political instability and economic development. (Adefuye: 1994) Nigerian Government should commission a direct study into Japan's humble and turbulent beginning and learn from it for necessary modifications. There is no doubt that Japan has contributed immensely to the economic recovery of Nigeria over the years, nevertheless, the rich Asian nation still has an enormous duty to perform towards the promotion of technical cooperation between her and Nigeria. A very important area Japan could do this is to extend her present technical aid and assistance to Nigeria and by funding projects in designated sectors of the economy. Such projects include agro-allied industries, petrochemicals, and power generation, as well as transmission.

Many advantages lie in both countries knowing more about each other's cultures. For instance Nigeria would gain a lot if she knows more about how Japan attained her present industrial development by improving its culture and tradition and applying science and technology. It is also a good lesson for Nigeria to know that Japan did not see industrialization and modernization as Westernization.

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