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Nigeria-Rwanda Relations: Strengthening Partnership for Development

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Abstract

Nigeria and Rwanda have long existed as colonial states of European imperialism in the 1800s, and gained their independence in the early 1960s, but they never had diplomatic relations until about mid-2000s. In 2011, the Republic of Rwanda opened its High Commission in Abuja, while the Federal Republic of Nigeria also opened its High Commission in Kigali in 2012. Since the official opening of their diplomatic missions, both countries have been enjoying very cordial bilateral relations in many sectors, especially in socioeconomic ties. It is a relation that has been described by some pundits as, “A big brother, little brother affair”. From this perspective, the paper examines how “big” and “little” brotherly affair can be taken as “equal partnership” to advance economic development for the benefit of both parties. Data were generated from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was derived from Nigeria High Commission diplomats in Kigali; while secondary data were gathered from newspapers, books and websites. The neoliberal theoretical perspective is adopted as a “partial” approach to analyze the value and volume of economic cooperation and interdependence of state relations. The study revealed that both countries have “signed general agreements for cooperation” which include Air transport agreement between Kigali and Lagos and the Artemis Accord, in Space exploration. As such, the paper stressed the imperative of strengthening of equal partnership that will deliver benefits for both countries’ burgeoning economies. The volume of trade can be increased to boost both countries’ economic development in particular, and Africa’s development in general.

Keywords: Nigeria, Rwanda, Bilateral Relations, Diplomatic Relations, Economic Cooperation, Equal Partnership, Economic Development.

Introduction

Nigeria gained independence from Britain on October 1, 1960, while Rwanda became independent on July 1, 1962, from Belgium. However, diplomatic relations between the two countries were established only in 2012. Reason for the current diplomatic relations

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between both countries, most probably, might have been due to international political development and Rwanda's peculiar path to statehood. Diplomatic relations between the two countries commenced in 2011 after Rwanda opened its High Commission in Abuja, and Nigeria opened its own in 2012 in Kigali. Since the opening of diplomatic missions and appointments of diplomats of ambassadorial grade, there have been flurry of diplomatic activities and accelerating socioeconomic relations. Therefore, the main objective of this paper is a reappraisal of the cordial relations and the need to strengthening the existing relationship. In this regard, the paper examines the background and theoretical perspective, the issue areas of strengthening economic relations, intelligence and security, startups, and the conclusion. As a recent and developing relationship, there are other areas of interest for further research endeavors.

Background

In the 1800s, the entities that later became Nigeria and Rwanda sovereign states were British and Belgian imperial powers' colonies. Nigeria gained independence in 1960 and Rwanda in 1962, but both only established diplomatic relations in 2011 and 2012, respectively. Even before this period, both countries have been having friendly interactions such that Rwandan army officers have received training in Nigeria's junior and senior military colleges since the 1980s. For instance, the Chief of Defense Staff (CDS) of Rwanda Defense Force, Gen. Patrick Nyamvumba, is a graduate of the Nigerian Defense Academy, Kaduna. He was appointed CDS on June 22, 2013, after he served as Force Commander of the African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), in Sudan, (2009-2013). In 2009, he succeeded Nigeria's General Martin Luther Agwai as Force Commander of UNAMID, in which Nigeria and Rwanda were two of the biggest troop contributors (Ogunlesi, 2015). Given these early friendly interactions, there is every good reason for both countries to strengthen their relationship based on mutual interdependence of co-equals and not master-servant affair.

As some media reports have rightly noted, it would be merely stating the obvious, that closer ties between Nigeria and Rwanda would deliver benefits for both countries. In particular, Ogunlesi writes: "For Rwandans, Nigeria offers access to Africa's largest economy, a market bigger than the entire East African region". For Nigerians, Rwanda, with a population of just over 12 million notwithstanding, "offers a foothold from which to explore the region" (Ogunlesi, 2015). Toward achieving their envisioned goals, both countries opened diplomatic missions and appointed substantive ambassadors some nine years ago. In 2011, Rwanda sent Joseph Habineza, as its first High Commissioner to Nigeria. High Commissioner Habineza was sent to familiar terrain, having worked for the Nigerian Breweries before going on to become sports minister in Kigali. In 2012, Peter Ogidi-Oke was appointment the Nigerian High Commissioner to Rwanda. Before his new assignment, he was resident in Uganda overseeing diplomatic relations with Rwanda.

Theoretical Perspective

There are several competing theories of international relations that can be used to explain state relations and each has its critique. For the purpose of this paper, the neoliberal perspective is adopted, from the perception of *transnational interdependence*. Neoliberalism as a perspective ‘accounts for the ways international institutions promote global change, cooperation, peace, and prosperity through collective programs. . .’ The theorists assert that ‘transnational interdependence has become a central component of the neoliberal perspective and continues to be widely used to interpret cooperative agreements between states under the continuing twenty-first-century conditions of anarchy and fears of dependence and exploitation’ (Kegley & Wittkop, 2001). Why this would apply to Nigeria-Rwanda relations is not farfetched, first, the thrust of the bilateral relations is cooperation, in particular economic cooperation. Second, Rwanda took a deliberate foreign policy decision to join the Commonwealth of Nations (though never a British colony) and adopted English as part of its official languages, so as to be part of the commonwealth organization to broaden its multilateral relations. The third reason is that equal partnership, even in big-little-brother-affair, interdependence is an important factor. Relations between Nigeria and Rwanda must be seen through the prism of mutual and reciprocal benefits, not of dependence and exploitation.

Strengthening Partnership for Development: Issue Areas

There are several areas that Nigeria and Rwanda can strengthen partnership for development, which include a number of factors of economic ties, intelligence and security, and African startups. The imperative of strengthening relations between Nigeria and Rwanda was underscored in 2011, when Nigeria’s President Goodluck Jonathan paid a state visit to Kigali. During the visit, Rwanda’s President Paul Kagame affirmed that “the visit further strengthens the ties between the two states”. The state visit was an opportunity for both countries to discuss matters of vital interests, during which ‘cooperation agreement’ was endorsed. President Kagame further said, “We have had an opportunity to discuss matters of importance to our two countries and our continent. The cooperation agreement . . . witnessed today (October 7, 2011) will further strengthen our partnership and benefit the citizens of both our countries” (*The New Times*, 2011). [Emphasis added]. Both countries share a common value of “commitment to work for a stable and dynamic Africa” that would contribute productively to the global economy.

In today’s globalized village-like interaction and increasingly unstable world, it has become imperative for countries to strengthen their bilateral relations. For Nigeria and Rwanda, after a good start since 2011, as earlier stated, very promising areas of cooperation can be strengthened through bilateral agreements. These include economic ties, intelligence and security, startups, among others, critical for development aspirations of both countries.

Economic ties

Nigeria is faced with massive developmental challenges, which include the need to reduce the dependency on oil and diversify the economy, address insufficient infrastructure, and build strong and effective institutions, as well as governance issues and public financial management systems. Similarly, for Rwanda, development challenges include low domestic savings, skills, and the high cost of energy, as some of the major constraints to private investment. As antidotes, the World Bank says, ‘Stronger dynamism in the private sector will help to sustain high investment rate and accelerate the growth’ (The World Bank Group, 2019) in Rwanda. And promoting domestic savings is perceived as crucial in accelerating development.

Nigeria is regarded as a Middle-Income Country (MIC), with emerging market and mixed economy. It has expanding manufacturing, service, financial, technology, communications, and entertainment sectors (The World Bank Group, 2019). On the other hand, Rwanda now aspires to Middle Income Country (MIC) and High-Income Country (HIC) status by 2035 and 2050, respectively (The World Bank Group, 2019). Although Nigeria may be said to have a MIC status, Rwanda’s aspiration to both MIC and HIC status would bring both countries to equal pedestal in relation to their population differentials. Nigeria’s population is about 200.96 million (2019 estimate) (World Population Review, 2019), while Rwanda population is just over 12 million. Nevertheless, Rwanda is branded as ‘one of the fastest-growing economies in the world,’ with an average of 8 per cent annual growth in the last ten years (The World Bank Group, 2019). And Nigeria offers access to Africa’s largest economy, a very big market in which Rwandan businesses, in particular, can thrive tremendously.

Previously, as Ogunlesi writes, the Nigerian business community ‘tend to set up their East African operations in Kenya, the region’s largest economy and an air transport hub, they now are considering Kigali’ (Ogunlesi, 2015). Consequently, on March 26, 2018, Nigeria and Rwanda signed the Bilateral Air Service Agreements (BASA), opening more routes for RwandAir and presents the county's private sector with enormous opportunities in an economically vibrant and large market of more than 200 million people. The Air Agreement was jointly signed by Jean de Dieu Uwihanganye, Rwanda’s Minister for Transport and his Nigerian counterpart, Hadi Abubakar Sirika (Tumwebaze, 2018), much to the satisfaction of both parties.

Given the nature of the Agreement, RwandAir has the latitude “to operate in Nigeria's air space without any limitations”. Minister Uwihanganye expressed his satisfaction with the deal when he said, “With the provision of fifth freedom which is reciprocal, the interconnectivity between the two countries will facilitate the private sectors of both countries to realize and tap into the economic and social benefits” (Tumwebaze, 2018). He notes that ‘the bilateral airspace service’ is geared at enhancing connectivity and, thus, generating more trade for the two countries.

But the actual signing of the instrument of ratification was not done until 2020, when the Nigerian government “signed a Bilateral Air Service Agreement (BASA) with the USA, India, Morocco as well as Rwanda”. Mr. Hadi Sirika, Nigerian Minister of Aviation, in his twitter handle @hadisirika stated: “I am glad to announce that Mr. President, on behalf of Nigeria, has signed the instruments of ratification of the bilateral air service agreement between Nigeria and USA, India, Morocco as well as Rwanda.” (Okeke, 2020). BASA, founded on the principle of reciprocity, is a deal that enables a country’s airlines to enjoy equal leverage, in terms of flight operations, in countries with which their home country has an air agreement.

From credible sources, Rwanda is rated as very receptive to business and investment. The *World Bank’s Doing Business* index for 2015 lists it as “the second most efficient country in terms of business regulation in Africa” (The World Bank Group, 2019). Also, economic corruption is regarded as very low in Rwanda as the 2014 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index showed. Rwanda ranked 55th place as to Nigeria’s 136th place (transparency.org, 2014).

As a result of the conducive business climate in Rwanda, High Commissioner Ogidi-Oke affirms that, “A lot of Nigerians are coming here. It’s one of the places in which it is easiest to do business” (Ogunlesi, 2015). In March 2018, this most likely made Kigali as Africa’s business center where the ambitious African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), was signed by 44 African countries. Before this time, economic relations have been building up between Nigeria and Rwanda. In March 2012, for instance, representatives of the Nigerian Economic Summit Group had a business trip to Rwanda. Just two months after this business trip, Nigeria-Rwandan Economic Summit was held in Lagos.

According to the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Free Trade Area Agreement “creates a single continental market for goods and services as well as a customs union with free movement of capital and business travelers” (Ighobor, 2018). It is imperative for countries joining AfCFTA to commit themselves to “removing tariffs on at least 90% of the goods they produce”. Without this commitment, free trade would be hindered, a mere mirage. ECA further prognosticates that “If all 55 African countries join a free trade area, it will be the world’s largest by number of countries, covering more than 1.2 billion people and a combined GDP of \$2.5 trillion”. The ECA adds that “intra-African trade is likely to increase by 52.3% by 2020 under the AfCFTA” (Ighobor, 2018). On July 7, 2019, the AfCFTA was officially launched at the 12th Extraordinary Summit of the African Union (AU) in Niamey, Niger, during which Nigeria, along with Benin Republic, signed the Agreement. So far, as at February 2023, 46 of the 54 signatory countries (85.2%) have deposited their instruments of AfCFTA ratification (Infographics, February 20, 2023), of the 22 needed, for it to effectively operational.

Some of “the critical parts” of the Agreement have been finalized to enable countries to commence trading under the AfCFTA. These include schedules of tariff concessions and services commitments, and policies around investment, intellectual property, and competition (Madden, 2019). Even when all these critical aspects are in place, most critical is the commitment to implement policies associated with the Agreement. Given the level of mutual understanding existing between Nigeria and Rwanda, equal partnership for development will ensure free trade between the two countries, as example for other African states. Trade and investment will not only accelerate both countries’ industrial and value-added jobs and development but also of Africa as a whole.

The resilient diplomacy of some member states of the African Union, including Nigeria and Rwanda, have paid off, leading to the official commencement of trade under the Agreement. On October 7, 2022, AfCFTA Secretariat unveiled the AfCFTA Guided Trade Initiative, in Accra, Ghana, that marked the take-off point of trade by the Agreement (Infographics, February 20, 2023). With the commencement of trade among African countries under the Agreement, this must come with commitment to implement the policies involved, which will give credence to the Agreement and bring about the expected benefits of development to the continent.

At a higher orbit of cooperation, Nigeria and Rwanda have also signed a space exploration agreement called the Artemis Accord, on December 13, 2022. At the signing ceremony, Nigeria was represented by the Minister of Communications, Isa Pantami, and Rwanda was represented by Francis Ngabo, the Chief Executive Officer of the Rwanda Space Agency.

With the signed Artemis Accord, both Nigeria and Rwanda become the first and second African countries, or the 22nd and 23rd, to do so in the world. This was done during the United States-Africa Space Forum, on the sideline of the US-Africa Leaders' Summit in Washington DC, United States, in December 2022. The Accord is envisioning to leverage outer space to meet shared goals for the United States-Africa relationship globally, that will involve panel discussions on the use of space to enhance sustainable development goals, capacity building and the roles of public and the private sectors in supporting US-Africa partnership (Space in Africa, 2022). The US-Africa Space Forum is facilitated by the US-owned National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

According to official briefs:

Through Artemis, NASA aims to land the first woman and first person of colour on the Moon, heralding a new era for space exploration and utilization. While NASA is leading the Artemis missions, international partnerships will play a key role in achieving a sustainable and robust presence on the Moon while preparing to conduct a historic human mission to Mars. With numerous countries and private sector players conducting missions and operations in cislunar space, it’s critical to establish a common set of principles to govern the civil exploration and use of outer space. The Artemis Accords will describe a shared vision for principles, grounded in the Outer Space Treaty of 1967, to create a safe and transparent

environment that facilitates exploration, science, and commercial activities for all humanity to enjoy (Space in Africa, 2022).

While in May 1999, the Nigeria-owned National Space Research and Development Agency (NASRDA) was established, the Rwanda Space Agency (RSA) was established in 2020 as a space research and development center. Both space agencies of the two countries must collaborate to ensure that the exploration of outer space benefits all of mankind for generations to come, especially in actualizing the African Union 2063 Agenda of a developed Africa.

Intelligence and security

There is a general but conscious consensus between Nigeria and Rwanda leadership that they both share similar aspirations and challenges, particularly in areas of development and security issues. President Kagame rightly stated that:

The people of Rwanda and Nigeria share similar aspirations; to overcome the past and create for themselves a prosperous and dignified future. We also share a commitment to work for a stable, dynamic Africa that contributes meaningfully to the global economy. I look forward to continue working with you . . . (the Nigerian Government) . . . to achieve our respective national goals and the common vision for our continent (Kagame, 2011). [Emphasis added]

In response, President Jonathan said:

As the world gets smaller and smaller, boundaries get thinner and thinner – leaders must continue to talk, meet and see how they can make sure they accelerate economic development within our two states. . . . We may have sub-regions but Africa is one continent and we all share common challenges--diseases, poverty and insecurity know no boundaries.

Presidents Kagame and Jonathan made these statements during a joint press conference held at Urugwiro Village at the end of President Jonathan's two-day visit to Kigali in 2011. In a joint *Communiqué* read by the Rwanda Minister of Foreign Affairs, Louise Mushikiwabo, the two Heads of State:

. . . reiterated their commitment to enhance cooperation through bilateral meetings and reciprocal visits, exchange programmes and share experiences on development, technology and ensure the socio--economic transformation of the peoples of the two sister states in areas such as infrastructure, energy, ICT, education and health. Rwanda and Nigeria also pledge to contribute to consolidating the democratic processes in African countries, and to promote peace, stability and development on the continent.

President Jonathan visited the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre where he laid a wreath in honor of the 1994 genocide victims. As he observed the grim picture painted by the memorial, he said it "is one that should serve as a lesson to Africans to avoid conflict" (The New Times, 2011). [Emphasis added]

On April 7, 2019, at the 25th Commemoration of the Rwandan Genocide, Nigerian Vice President Yemi Osinbajo, former Presidents of Nigeria and South Africa, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo and Thabo Mbeki, among others, were there. Vice President Osinbajo said, “. . . I think that there are many leaders today who want to ensure that we do not ever see a repeat of what happened, the genocide that happened here in Rwanda or anywhere else in the world . . .” (News Agency of Nigeria, 2019). Never again would our leaders allow their rhetoric set people against people but allow social justice to be the preoccupation of good governance in every African state.

In addition, forestalling this never to happen again, intelligence and security measures must need be put in place, a sort of collaboration between Nigeria and Rwanda security agencies. Both Presidents Kagame and Jonathan have observed that conflicts or humanitarian crises do not only affect individual countries but also the continent in general. Very importantly, they added that “African countries need to pool efforts and resources to resolve the outstanding challenges”. To pool efforts and resources together to confront challenges demands intelligence gathering to assist in taking preemptive measures.

Rwandan intelligence and security agencies have, as a result of the genocide, learned some deep lessons to help prevent future occurrence of such magnitude. They can share experience with their Nigeria counterparts. More so, as it has been alluded to in this paper, the military of both countries have had long time association, especially in personnel training. This can be leveraged, broadened and strengthened to include regular intelligence sharing.

This is important, given the background of the ethnic and economic factors that led to the 1994 Rwandan Genocide. Although Beauchamp writes that “The split between Hutus and Tutsis arose not as a result of religious or cultural differences, but economic ones,” however, the undercurrent remained ethnic (Beauchamp, 2014). Culturally, Hutus people are farmers while Tutsis people are herders. However, this occupational difference was non-issue but class distinctions that generated discrimination between them.

As Beauchamp concedes, “Gradually, these class divisions became seen as ethnic designations”. During the colonial period, ‘German and Belgian rule made the dividing lines between the groups sharper’. This was so because they introduced a “divide and conquer” administrative policy, akin to the British’s “divide and rule” in Nigeria. The Belgian policy ‘meant supporting the Tutsi monarchy and requiring that all local chiefs be Tutsis, turning the Tutsis into symbols of colonial rule for the Hutu majority’. Beauchamp asserts that, after independence, “the resentment created by colonial divide-and-conquer bred violence,” which, of course, culminated in the 1994 genocide. “Divide and rule” and “divide and conquer”, arguably, partly caused the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970) and the 1994 Rwandan genocide. But the peoples of both countries would vow never again for such occurrence in their existence.

Sadly, Nigeria has been experiencing deadly clashes between herdsman and farmers in since 2015, in which the Fulani ethnic group was singled out, who are mostly the former. Since May 1999, the beginning of Nigeria's Fourth Republic, herder-farmer violence has claimed more than 10,000 people dead and displaced hundreds of thousands more (Ilo, Jonathan-Icaver, & Adamolekun, 2019). It has followed a trend in the increase of farmer-herder conflicts throughout much of the Western Sahara-Africa.

Between 2015 and mid-2019, the violence engulfed most parts of Nigeria, especially the Middle Belt, which gave credence to the “conspiracy theories around the farmer-herder conflict,” stirring charges and counter-charges of pogroms and even genocide. A Fulani social cultural group, Jonde Jam Fulani Youth Association of Nigeria (JAFUYAN) describe the killings in Numan as: “the latest in a coordinated agenda to wipe out our people systematically through ethnic cleansing” (International Crisis Group, 2019). To the Fulani, they believe that other ethnic groups across the country “have hatched a grand plot” against them. According to International Crisis Group (ICG), parallel accusations swirl among agrarian groups. After the early January 2018 attacks in Benue state, the pre-eminent Tiv monarch, His Royal Majesty James Ortese Ayatse, said the attacks on his people were “Well planned,” and “... nothing short of ethnic cleansing and genocide against the Tiv nation” (International Crisis Group, 2019).

The strong concern across the Nigerian Middle Belt and southern states is that herders are intent on seizing their lands. The clatter of accusations is capable of causing national disintegration and complicating prospects for resolving the conflicts. Some pundits have cautioned against profiling the Fulani ethnic group, citing what happened in the Rwandan genocide case, which is serving as a reference point, albeit a gory memory.

Aside from the horror of the 100 days genocide that claimed about a million casualties in April 1994, Rwanda is not totally free from al-Shabbab terrorism. Although Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda are the major African Union Mission in Somalia troop-contributing countries, Rwanda is as vulnerable to attacks as any of these countries. It is not off the terror group’s radar. These other East African countries, Kenya, Uganda, Burundi and Ethiopia, “have all been billed vulnerable to Al Shabaab attacks” (Oluoch, 2019), including Rwanda. The possibility will not be unconnected to the African peacekeepers’ intensification of ‘efforts to flush out’ the terrorist group from their strongholds, even in Somalia.

Similarly, Nigeria has been in the throes Boko Haram terrorist attacks since 2009, which is estimated to have claimed over 20,000 lives and displaced over 2 million people. North East Nigeria is mostly affected by the Boko Haram insurgency; and other countries which include Chad, Cameroun, and Niger. These countries in West Africa, East Africa, and Central Africa face, more or less, similar security challenges, which requires a collaborative effort among them to defeat the insurgent groups. More so between Nigeria and Rwanda as they both strive to strengthen their cordial relations for greater development of their

region. It has been attested to that Rwanda is ‘one of the fastest-growing economies,’ not only in Africa but also in the world, since 2009. But insecurity, conflict and wars are inimical to development, requiring that Rwanda should not be allowed to slide again to genocide.

“African startups”: A path to development

Africa’s development has been a subject of discourse since political independence of African states in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In recent times, some kind of ‘innovation has been at the heart of many of the progressive discussions around,’ with focus on ‘the benefits and impact of digital technology as internet penetration’ spreads across the African continent. As Adeshokan writes, this “type of digital innovation has often relied on the fast-growing crop of startups in major tech hubs in Nairobi, Cape Town, and Lagos led by young entrepreneurs with ideas and young businesses that hope to impact and change local industry sectors and even entire countries” (Adeshokan, 2019), and, indeed, the entire continent. A startup is a rudimentary company, the product of an idea, ‘founded by one or more entrepreneurs in order to develop a unique product or service and bring it to market’ (Fontinelle, 2019). Typically, startups tend to rely on initial funding from the founders or their families.

Africa has for long depended on modern technologies as diffused from the advanced countries of Europe, the United States, China, and others. Now some startups are developing indigenously and spreading, which can be described and called “African startups” (Adeshokan, 2019). One of these--the Co-Creation Hub (CcHub) -- had its debuts in Kigali, moving from Lagos. This Lagos-based tech hub has “some of Nigeria’s best-known startups,” but has also “decided to focus on building a design culture from scratch . . .” by opening “a design hub and innovation center in Kigali”. According to Bosun Tijani, co-founder of CcHub, “The new center aligns with CcHub’s original vision to take advantage of technology’s potential to meet Africa’s challenges in education, health, and governance ‘while unlocking social and economic value’” (Adeshokan, 2019). Tijani says, “Africa cannot remain as consumers, we need to grow into producers of solutions”. He affirms that, “With the design lab, we are looking to deepen our work, to allow us support the smart application of technology especially for prosperity across multiple countries.”

There is also the Afrilabs, a pan-African network of around 90 hubs across 30 African countries. Rebecca Enonchong, Afrolabs’ Chair, says “a design hub is a mini” Research and Development (R&D) center. This is imperative for the African continent where there is a lack of R&D, but necessary to actualize the African Union 2063 Agenda (AU 2063 Agenda)². Enonchong believes that the success of the design lab in Kigali will lead to ‘a multiplication of these innovation labs’ across the continent.

² AU 2063 Agenda is a strategic framework for the socio- economic transformation of the African continent over the next 50 years, starting from 2013. According to the AU document, “It builds on, and seeks to accelerate the implementation of past and existing continental initiatives for **growth and sustainable development.**”

Aaron Fu, managing director of Meltwater Entrepreneurial School of Technology (MEST)³, an incubator program for technology entrepreneurs, says, “A key advantage African startups have when competing with global players is their keen awareness of the specific design elements that work well in the unique commercial ecosystems and cultural environments” (Adeshokan, 2019). These design labs will help accelerate the development drive of the continent.

Towards this realization, there is need for the active participation of both private investors and national governments. Because “traditional funding sources include small business loans from banks or credit unions, government-sponsored Small Business Administration (Small and Medium Enterprises) loans from local banks, and grants made by nonprofit organizations and state governments” (Fontinelle, 2019). [Emphasis added]. In this regard, Nigeria and Rwanda governments have critical role to play, especially in serving as collaterals for the budding startup companies in their individual countries. They can explore further the joint establishment of R & D centers, for example, for material and metallurgy development. Where this may already exist, it can be strengthened and expanded.

What exists today as technological and industrialization, that give developed status to First and Second World countries, began as startups. Thomas Edison, for instance, was an acclaimed inventor and entrepreneur. He started life as newspaper and vegetable vendor to become an inventor. In 1876, Edison's major innovation was the establishment of an industrial research lab in Menlo Park, Middlesex County, New Jersey, United States. It was a startup in which he initially encountered funding difficulties but, with the modest financial help from his father, he was able to build a laboratory and machine shop in Menlo Park (History.com Editors, 2009), which spread to other places.

With helps from family, personal savings and, later, other investors, Edison was able to set up more experimental shops for the telephone, phonograph, electric railway, iron ore separator, electric lighting, and other technological devices, some in collaboration with other like-minds. Edison, as an American inventor and businessman, has been described not only as America's greatest inventor but “the World’s Greatest Inventor”. His inventive genius contributes to the “well-being, comfort, and pleasure of the human race” (The Franklin Institute, 2019). His inventions had greatly impacted the modern industrialized world.

Robert Goddard was another great inventor that started modestly in the area of rocket engineering. Goddard's early tests and others were modestly financed over a period of several years by the Smithsonian Institution, to which he had “appeal for financial support”.

³ MEST is a nongovernmental institution, established in 2008, and headquartered in Accra, Ghana. It is a “Pan-African technology and entrepreneurial training program, seed fund and incubator, building world-class, globally successful tech companies”, according to its founders. There are ‘Entrepreneurs in Training’ (EITs) from Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria, Cote d’Ivoire and Zimbabwe.

From 1930 to the mid-1940s, he received assistance that “financed the work on a scale that made possible a small shop and crew and experimental flights in the open spaces” of the American southwest, at Roswell, Massachusetts. Here, Goddard spent most of his remaining days in “the unending trial-and-error reach for high altitudes”. His small rockets, “early prototypes of the modern Moon thrusters, achieved altitudes of up to 1.6 kilometers (1 mile)” above the ground (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2014). Today, space rockets travel at supersonic and hypersonic speeds into outer space and landing in the Moon, and even some approaching the Sun.

The thesis being advanced here is simple: that the massive sophisticated technology of today began as very modest startups; funded through family, friends, private investors, organizations, who were ready to risk their money in uncertain venture. Startups are always risky propositions but potential investors have several approaches to determining their value. Most startups have no history of success, simply an idea being experimented, and little or no profit to show. That makes investing in them risky. “If an idea seems to have merit, potential investors may use any of several approaches to estimate how much money it could take to get it off the ground” (Fontinelle, 2019). As the African young entrepreneurs establish their startups in Nigeria and Rwanda, and other countries, private investors and governments must provide the necessary assistance to make them blossom to achieve AU 2063 Agenda.

The AU 2063 Agenda have several thematic areas of development and aspirations, which African startups can adequately accomplish if well implemented. Every aspect of the 2063 Agenda is meant to bring well-being, comfort, pleasure and human dignity to every African. The 6th Aspiration says in part: “An Africa Whose Development is people driven, relying on the potential offered by African People . . .” (African Union, 2013).

Agenda 2063 has as its Goal 1: “A High Standard of Living, Quality of Life and Well Being for All Citizens”. The 2nd Goal states: “Well Educated Citizens and Skills revolution underpinned by Science, Technology and Innovation”. Among the priority areas include the following:

- Incomes, Jobs and decent work
- Poverty, Inequality and Hunger eradication (at least alleviation)
- Social Security and Protection including Persons with Disabilities
- Modern and Livable Habitats and Basic Quality Services

The driving force in all of this is the 2nd Goal for which startups must be given priority attention in research and development across the continent. In fact, the 1st Aspiration is: “A Prosperous Africa, based on Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development,” with the goal of “transformed economies” (4th Goal). For this to happen, part of the priority areas includes “STI driven Manufacturing/Industrialization and Value Addition” and “Economic diversification and resilience”. By STI, it is meant Science, Technology, and Innovation,

which may not be totally adequate to meet the aspiration of a “prosperous Africa” that ensures “Africa’s place in global affairs” in equal partnership. Science, technology, innovation, must include invention, original to Africa. The clear lesson Africa must learn, from the United States-China Trade War (or Dispute), why China has been squiring up with the U.S. since 2017, was that China has been able to develop strong home-based manufacturing. In other words, indigenous Chinese innovation and invention of manufactured goods and services could compete favorably with foreign ones. Africa cannot afford less economic viability to compete favorably in global affairs in the next 44 years (2063).

Silicon Valley, one of the high-tech industrial complexes in the U.S., is on fast motion, and is home to many startups. “The entrepreneurial environment of Silicon Valley is characterized by innovation, collaboration, and risk-taking. It provides the essential motivational framework required for tech startups” (Seth, 2019). Indeed, all that is going on at Silicon Valley, especially the collaborative effort should motivate African startups to accelerate the process of development in the continent. The collaboration and risks involved should be encouraged among African scientists and engineers, and governments. Currently, since its establishment in 2008, MEST has attracted entrepreneurs from six African countries, namely Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria, Cote d’Ivoire and Zimbabwe. And CcHub, which has just moved to Rwanda, is also in Nigeria, South Africa and Kenya. There is need for the multiplication of these tech startups across the entire African countries.

Conclusion

Although Nigeria and Rwanda gained independence in 1960 and Rwanda in 1962, respectively, however, they only established diplomatic relations in 2011 and 2012. Even before this period, both countries have been having friendly interactions such that Rwandan army officers received training in Nigeria’s military institutions since the 1980s. The paper has reappraised some crucial areas in which both countries are having cordial relations and how these could be strengthened. These include economic relations under which economic summits have been held, and businesses are receiving a boost. Typical of these are the Air Agreement and Space exploration between both countries, in conjunction with NASA. The AfCFTA is a continental agenda, however Nigeria and Rwanda can strengthen their bilateral trade relations under its transaction mechanisms. Intelligence and security are other areas of critical importance examined, which the two states could work towards to share information. How Rwanda was able to overcome the 1994 genocide and the country emerged strong and thriving is a great lesson for other African countries. Nevertheless, care must be taken not to allow a repeat of the past gory tales. African startups are considered a path to development, which requires determinate effort of support from private investors and governments. Multiplication of startups across Africa will serve as great impetus for the African Free Trade Areas and the AU 2063 Agenda, all combined to accelerate Africa’s

development. In all these, a strong bilateral and equal partnership between Nigeria and Rwanda is a critical factor in development for both countries and Africa as a whole.

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