

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH: AN APPRAISAL OF THE NIGERIAN SITUATION 1995-2023

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ABSTRACT

The World Trade Organization (WTO) is an organisation that plays a pivotal role in shaping global trade policies, fostering economic cooperation and addressing trade disputes among its member states. For developing countries in the Global South, the WTO represents both an opportunity for economic integration and a platform to voice concerns about inequities in the global trading system. Nigeria, being a part of the WTO has Africa's largest economy and most populous nation and it has been an active participant in the WTO since its inception in 1995. The WTO has a principle of trade without borders and it has its focus in the area of liberalization and privatization. Now, Nigeria being a member of this organization seeks to reaffirm its commitment to international trade and seek technical aids to help build its economic prestige in the global market. Hence this article seeks to examine Nigeria's engagement with the WTO from 1995 to 2023 and the progress its economy has recorded since its membership. Despite Nigeria's membership in the World Trade Organization since 1995, the country just like the other countries that make up the global south has continued to face some significant challenges that has limited them from fully benefiting from total global trade liberation. This article employs a descriptive research method, focusing primarily on the collection and analysis of primary data gathered through qualitative interviews with key stakeholders, including community leaders, government officials, etc. For the secondary sources, relevant documents such as published and unpublished books and papers, lecture notes, articles, textbooks, journals and newspapers obtained from the library, internet and documentaries were consulted. The WTO being a body that facilitates trade relations amongst countries has from inception ordained its objectives. Nigeria, as a member country showed its full commitment to the organization by implementing policies and programmes that includes; primary export-oriented philosophy, planned public sector led economic development, import substitution, indigenization, Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), NEEDS (National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy) deregulation, public private partnership, privatization and commercialization. All these were in line with the WTO guidelines. However, with all the above listed effort by the organization and Nigeria as a member, this article was able to bring to light that the objectives of the WTO to serve as a body that would push Nigeria to the horizon in global trade has been limited because over the years oil has been Nigeria's greatest revenue generator and this is what the nation has been relying on and this has limited the countries investment in other sectors such as agriculture, tourism etc. Sequel to this existing trade imbalance, this article while advocating that the WTO abort certain policies hurting Nigeria's Economy, equally suggest proper economic diversification

Keywords: Privatisation, global south, international trade, economic integration, global trade.

INTRODUCTION

The word ‘trade’ has been defined in the Oxford Advanced Learner dictionary as the activity in which people are buying and selling or exchanging the goods and services between countries. In the international face, international trade is the exchange of capital, goods and services across international borders¹.

Trade is also one of the oldest and most developed form of international economic relations and for the Global South which is made up of countries that include Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Oceania it is often said that their economies are known to be less developed when compared to the Global North. The Global South having a developing economy plays a critical role in the international trade and market because they are resources rich in mineral and agricultural products. Moreover, they have economies that foster large industrial and manufacturing hubs with lower cost labour. They are also known for their large agricultural exports especially in products like coffee, cocoa, cotton and tropical fruits. The Global South economies are also attractive markets for both regional and global trade because they have growing customers and they also expand the middle classes.

In an increasingly interconnected world, international trade serves as a cornerstone for economic growth, cultural exchange and diplomatic relations. Established in 1995, the World Trade Organization (WTO) emerged from the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), evolving to address the complexities of modern trade, including services and intellectual property. This exploration of the WTO’s history reveals not only its foundational principles and objectives but also the challenges it faces in adapting to a rapidly changing global landscape².

Now, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was signed in October 31st 1947 by 23 countries namely Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, France, Denmark, Ecuador, France, India, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, South Africa, United Kingdom, United States, Venezuela, Sweden, Switzerland³. This was a treaty created with the aim of minimizing barriers to international trade by eliminating or reducing quotas, tariffs and subsidies. It was intended to boost economic recovery after World War II⁴.

GATT again is a global trade body that seeks to push the world toward a reality where goods and services are exchanged among countries without tariffs, quotas, favouritism or discrimination. However, decolonization which gave developing countries freedom over their trade resulted in a large number of new nations joining the GATT, hence the second and third decades of the body witnessed an upsurge in its membership and at the end of the 1950s, the industrialized world with 21 countries out of a total membership of 37 constituted the majority at GATT. Then again the 1960s witnessed the inclusion of 36 developing countries, Afghanistan, Algeria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo (Brazzaville), Côte d’Ivoire (Ivory Coast), Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Honduras, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Panama, Paraguay, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Venezuela, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe⁵ thus changing the equation overwhelmingly in favour of the developing countries. Their numbers increased further, as another 16 joined in the 1970s and early 1980s. Even though most of the developing countries did not join its ranks until the 1960s or later, the desire to bring new nations in its sphere had started to influence the thinking in GATT already in the 1950s and the specific problems of these countries were included in its deliberations. The GATT members began to implement special provisions for developing countries, such as longer transition periods for tariff reductions and technical assistance. While this was intended to support development, it also complicated negotiations and created a dual system within GATT and the inclusion of diverse economic interests led to fragmentation within GATT. Developed countries often clashed with developing nations over trade rules, which weakened the cohesion of the agreement and made it harder to achieve unified objectives. Hence, GATT, though largely successful in reaching its goal, was dissolved and the WTO was later adopted because GATT was said to lack a coherent institutional structure⁶.

Hence the World Trade Organization (WTO) being the predecessor of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) came into existence and has been successful over the last 50 years at reducing tariff and other trade barriers among an ever-increasing number of countries. The predecessor to the WTO began in 1947 with only 23 members and today it has 146 members, comprising approximately 97 percent of world trade.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

The Global South

The phrase “Global South” refers broadly to the regions of Latin America, Asia, Africa and Oceania. It is one of a family of terms, including “Third World” and “Periphery,” that denote regions outside Europe and North America,

mostly (though not all) low-income and often politically or culturally marginalized. The use of the phrase Global South marks a shift from a central focus on development or cultural difference toward an emphasis on geopolitical relations of power. From its earliest days, sociology had concepts for describing global difference. From Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer to Emile Durkheim and Lester Frank Ward, sociologists discussed social progress by drawing broad distinctions between “advanced” and “primitive” institutions and societies. They located the primitive both in the past and in the colonized world of their own day. From the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, empire and colonization had brought a flood of information about other societies to the intellectuals of Europe and North America. The societies identified in early sociological texts as the most primitive were the San people of Southern Africa, the indigenous people of Tierra del Fuego and the Aboriginal people of Australia. It is no accident that these were three of the southernmost populations known to European colonizers; they were literally the most distant. Thus, European colonial expansion provided the historical context that underpins the way we use these terms now⁷.

The concept of the Global South as a synonym for the Third World began to gain traction in the 1970s, with the call for a New International Economic Order. But it really rose to prominence with the 1980 Brandt report written by an international commission led by former West German chancellor, Willy Brandt. The landmark document distinguished between those countries with comparatively higher GDP per capita which were overwhelmingly concentrated in the Northern Hemisphere and poorer ones. The majority of the latter group fell south of what became known as the Brandt line, an imaginary boundary running from the Rio Grande into the Gulf of Mexico, across the Atlantic Ocean, through the Mediterranean Sea and over the vast expanses of Central Asia to the Pacific Ocean. (From a purely geographic perspective, the map left much to be desired, since many nations designated as “southern,” India among them, lie entirely in the Northern Hemisphere, while others such as “northern” Australia and New Zealand are located below the equator).

Following the end of the Cold War, the term “Third World” fell gradually out of favour because the Second World itself had ceased to exist and because it seemed pejorative, connoting a group of backward and unstable nations mired in poverty. By comparison, the “Global South” offered a more neutral and appealing label. Hence, the Global South became synonymous with the **Group of 77**, a collection of postcolonial and developing countries that united in 1964 to jointly advocate for their collective economic interests and to enhance their negotiating capacity at the UN. These countries include;

- Africa: Ethiopia, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa
- Asia: Cambodia, Indonesia and Thailand
- Latin America: Argentina, Brazil and Colombia
- Middle East: Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates
- Oceania: Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia and Tonga

The countries that make up the G77 also came together to pursue the following objectives;

- Advocate for the economic interests of its members
- Improve its members’ negotiating power at the UN
- Boost the economies of the Global South

The official languages of the G77’s are Arabic, English, French and Spanish. The G77’s logo was first designed for its first ministerial meeting in Algiers in 1967⁸.

Today the members of the G77, now 134 countries strong, regularly refer to themselves as the Global South and the UN has launched multiple bodies and initiatives to respond to their needs and aspirations, including a UN Office for South-South Cooperation.

World Trade Organization (WTO)

The World Trade Organization (WTO) is a body that emanated from its predecessor, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and it has provided a provisional avenue for dialogue and coordination of the rules and regulations on international trade with commitments that are full, permanent and enforceable in order to extend the frontiers of trade to include services and trade-related aspects of intellectual property and the WTO have been enormously successful over the last 50 years at reducing tariff and other trade barriers among an ever-increasing number of countries. The predecessor to the WTO began in 1947 with only 23 members; today it has 146 members, comprising approximately 97 percent of world trade. Although the WTO, established in 1995, is relatively young for an international institution, it has its origins in the Bretton Woods Conference at the end of World War II. At this conference, finance ministers from the Allied nations gathered to discuss the failings of World War I’s Versailles Treaty and the creation of a new international monetary system that would support post-war reconstruction, economic

stability and peace. The Bretton Woods Conference produced two of the most important international economic institutions of the post-war period: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank). Recognizing that the beggar-thy-neighbour tariff policies of the 1930s had contributed to the environment that led to war, ministers discussed the need for a third post-war institution, the International Trade Organization (ITO), but left the problem of designing it to their colleagues in government ministries with responsibility for trade⁹.

S. P. Shuklah opined that GATT was designed to deal with cross-border trade in goods hence, it had little said in domestic policy-making. GATT also conferred the principle of most favoured-nation treatment on its members. This MFN (most favoured-nation) principle could not be abridged or infringed with new conditionality's or additional requirements except by amendment to the basic tenet in Article I that requires agreement of all contracting parties¹⁰ and the Article I of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) primarily deals with the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) principle and below are the principles;

- First there is unconditional MFN: This means that if a country grants a trade advantage to one country, it must extend the same advantage to all other WTO members. This principle ensures non-discriminatory treatment among trading partners.
- Scope of Application: The MFN principle applies to various aspects of trade, including: tariffs and other charges on imports and export.
- Regulations on imports and exports, internal taxes and charges.
- Internal regulations affecting the sale, offering for sale, purchase, transportation, distribution or use of products by adhering to Article I¹¹.

Hence the WTO system began with an array of agreements, declarations, decisions and understandings that the WTO Agreement comprises contracts that has superseded the GATT and sequel to the above, Shuklah continued by stating that the WTO which started with the agreement at the ministerial meeting at Marrakesh (Morocco) scheduled for April 1994 is no longer confined to cross-border transactions in tangible goods and currently extends to transactions in intangibles, such as services because it began with involving itself with supplies, through commercial presence in foreign countries. Furthermore, the system is no longer restricted to exchange transactions, but also stipulates the criteria that determine the permissibility of policies and practices which may restrict the production or trade options of investors. It has also established a bridgehead for the future introduction of norms with regard to investment and competition policy. Most importantly, the WTO also laid down a model law for its member countries for the protection of intellectual property rights and it provides a common enforcement mechanism for all disciplines comprised within the system. Thus, the system is creating its own rules with regard to intra-border transactions and is laying down the norms and standards of member countries' domestic policies, making these enforceable by denying, to those who fail to endorse the new system, MFN privileges for goods trade.

WTO OPERATIONS

The operations of the WTO is one that is structurally based on its objectives to improve the welfare of people around the world (countries) by ensuring that trade flows as smoothly, predictably and freely as possible. Hence below are the operations the WTO have put in place to ensure its goals are met in world trade;

Establishment of a Strong Global Trade Rule

Here the WTO established a global trade system of rules so that to ensure that in trade there would be assurance and stability between the consumer and the producers. With the rules, consumers and producers can enjoy secure supplies and greater choice of finished products. Hence some of the rules set under this operation includes;

- That decisions in the WTO would be typically taken with the consensus of the members and these decisions must be ratified by members of the parliaments.
- The WTO also resolve amongst its members that trade frictions must be channelled into the WTO dispute settlement process where the focus is on interpreting agreements and commitments that ensures that members trade policies conform with the WTO standard and that way the concerns of disputes spilling over into becoming political and military cases amongst member countries are curtailed.
- Again, all member countries of the WTO are bound by the rules that trade barriers must be removed between the people and the trading economies this is backed up by the multilateral trade agreement and negotiations signed by all member countries with the ratification of the parliament to ensure that every member of the WTO knows their rights in the global trading and it ensures also that the government of every member keeps

trading activities and negotiations transparent and predictable to the benefit of everyone who seeks to enter into trade relations with them.

Sequel to the above, it is important to note that the rules under this operation is to ensure that trade is stable and transparent amongst member countries because this would help on the long run to improve standard of living, create jobs and improve the lives of the people who constitute the WTO member countries¹².

Establishment of Trade Negotiation Operations

This operation was developed through a series of trade negotiations and rounds, held under the GATT. The first rounds dealt mainly with tariff reductions but later negotiations included other areas such as anti-dumping and non-tariff measures. The 1986-94 round known as the "Uruguay Round" was what led to the WTO's creation.

The negotiations of this operation continued again in 1997 and at this time agreements were reached by groups of WTO members on liberalizing, telecommunications services, establishing tariff-free trade in information technology products and opening up their financial services. The trade negotiations operations went further in 2000, to begin talks in agriculture and services and these new developments were incorporated into the fourth WTO Ministerial Conference in Doha, Qatar, in November 2001.

This new agenda was aimed at pushing for non-agricultural tariffs, trade and the environment, WTO rules on anti-dumping and subsidies, trade facilitation, transparency in government procurement, intellectual property and a range of issues raised by developing economies as difficulties they face in implementing WTO agreements. The negotiations on these and other topics amongst member countries resulted in the revising of the WTO rulebook and this rule book was adopted by the 8th Ministerial Conference in 2011.

Again, at the 9th Ministerial Conference in Bali in 2013, WTO members struck the Agreement on Trade Facilitation and it was founded with the aim to reduce border delays by slashing red tape (excessive and unnecessarily complex regulations and bureaucratic procedures that hinder or slow down the flow of goods and services across borders)¹³.

The trade negotiations operations also followed up on matters on goods, services, (through agreements like the Marrakesh Agreement that handled areas such as agriculture, with specific issues such as product standards, subsidies and actions taken against dumping.

For services the trade negotiations operations established the WTO's Intellectual Property Agreement that handles the issues of copyrights, patents, trademarks, geographical names used to identify products, industrial designs and undisclosed information such as trade secrets¹⁴.

The Dispute Settlement Operation

The WTO dispute settlement operation is charged with the responsibility of handling trade conflict between its member states. Under this operation the members of the WTO can file complaints against other member states if they feel the trade and economic policies of a country are divergent from their commitments under one of the agreements of the WTO. Following the complaint, there are formal hearings like a court until a settlement is reached¹⁵.

This operation further encourages members to settle their differences through consultation with each other. However, if this proves to be unsuccessful, they can follow a stage-by-stage procedure that includes the possibility of a ruling by a panel of experts. The confidence in the system is set to be borne out of the number of cases that has been resolved by WTO totalling more than 600 cases since the WTO was established¹⁶.

Technical Assistance and Training Operation

The technical operation works with the WTO to organize technical cooperation missions to developing economies annually. It also holds many trade policy courses each year in Geneva for government officials. Regional seminars are also held regularly in all regions of the world, with a special emphasis on African countries. Seminars have also been organized in Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, Middle East and Pacific.

Funding for technical cooperation and training comes from three sources and the first is; the WTO's regular budget, the second is the voluntary contributions from WTO members and the third is through the cost-sharing either by countries involved in an event or by international organizations¹⁷.

FUNCTIONS OF THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

- Administering World Trade Organization (WTO) trade agreement
- Encouragement of the trade negotiations.
- Handling trade disputes

- Monitoring national trade policy
- Technical assistance and training for developing countries
- Co-operation with other international organizations such as the World Bank and IMF to help build its member countries and their economies.
- The above functions are achieved because the WTO has structured operations that;
- Facilitates the implementation, administration and operation of the Agreement and Multilateral Trade Agreements and provides a framework for Plurilateral Trade Agreements.
- Provides a forum for negotiations among members on multilateral trade relations and a framework for implementing the results of these negotiations.
- Administers the Understanding on Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of Disputes.
- Administers the Trade Policy Review Mechanism (TPRM).
- Cooperates with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank for greater coherence in global economic policy-making¹⁸.

THE NIGERIAN SITUATION AND THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

Nigeria is the Giant of Africa with approximately **230 million inhabitants** and today, Nigeria is the largest country in Africa by population and one of the largest in the world. Nigeria is also a melting pot of peoples (and about 500 indigenous languages are spoken by its different communities) as well as an example of the multi-ethnic nature of the African states¹⁹, established after gaining independence from the colonial powers and of the difficulties these states had to overcome in their contemporary history to assert their sovereignty from political vicissitudes to the management of resources in the territory. As a nation, Nigeria **has all the potential to establish itself as the continent's champion** because of the vastness of its territory, its demographic weight and its many agricultural and mineral resources, especially oil. In the last decade, the country has also managed to improve its prospects and has put in place initiatives to attract foreign investments²⁰ and all these has given the nation Nigeria the position of being “A Big Brother” to other African countries.

However, Nigeria being a middle income, mixed economy with an emerging market housed expanding financial service, communications technology and entertainment sectors. It is ranked 26th in the world in terms of GDP and is the largest economy in Africa²¹. But then Nigeria's economy has suffered from years of mismanagement, inconsistent, poorly conceived government policies and the lack of basic infrastructure. In addition, cheap consumer imports, resulting from an overvalued Naira, coupled with excessively high domestic production costs due in part to erratic electricity and fuel supply, have pushed down industrial capacity utilization of the country²². Sequel to the above, Nigeria needed a platform that would help it in rebuilding and maintaining infrastructures. There was also a need for the country to attract foreign investment, hence Nigeria had to seek for a trade policy that would foster growth for its overall developmental objectives and this was what resulted in Nigeria joining the WTO organization.

The Nigerian Membership of the World Trade Organization

The WTO begot its first membership from its predecessor GATT and the European Communities after ratifying the Uruguay Round Agreement. As at 2013, the WTO has 159 members and 25 observers²³ and this further helped the members to build a strong bond that have over the year helped the body to negotiate their terms and conditions of membership.

The first term which states that any state or customs territory having full autonomy in the conduct of its trade policies is eligible to accede to the WTO on terms agreed between it and WTO members. This was the way Nigeria joined the WTO when it came into existence in January 1, 1995. Nigeria is a member of the most active groups in the WTO, such as African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP), African Group, G90, G20, G33 and W52 Sponsors²⁴. Hence, these groups united as they were by a bond of poverty, economic deprivation and misrule and they became the numerical majority in the WTO and were known for often speaking with one voice and resort to bloc voting in taking decisions or partaking in deliberations at various forum²⁵.

In addition to the above, Nigeria joined the WTO with some objectives in mind and that includes;

- To clearly reaffirm its commitment to the multilateral trading system, its rules and disciplines and trade liberalization.
- To emphasize its economic and trade priorities.

- To restate the challenges that it faces as a developing nation, to seek the concrete and technical support of the international community for fuller and more beneficial integration of its economy into the global trading system²⁶.

Now, in a bid for Nigeria to fulfil its obligations and membership under the WTO agreement, Nigeria promulgated series of economic policies and programmes for the purposes of facilitating the achievement of rapid economic development and ultimate industrialization. These policies and programmes included the primary export oriented philosophy, planned public sector led economic development, import substitution, indigenization, structural adjustment programme (SAP), deregulation, public private partnership, privatization and commercialization²⁷.

Sequel to the above F. Adewumi started that privatization and commercialization of public enterprises have been the two key components of economic reforms programme of Nigeria since the mid-1980s and it began with the introduction of SAP by the Babangida administration in 1986²⁸.

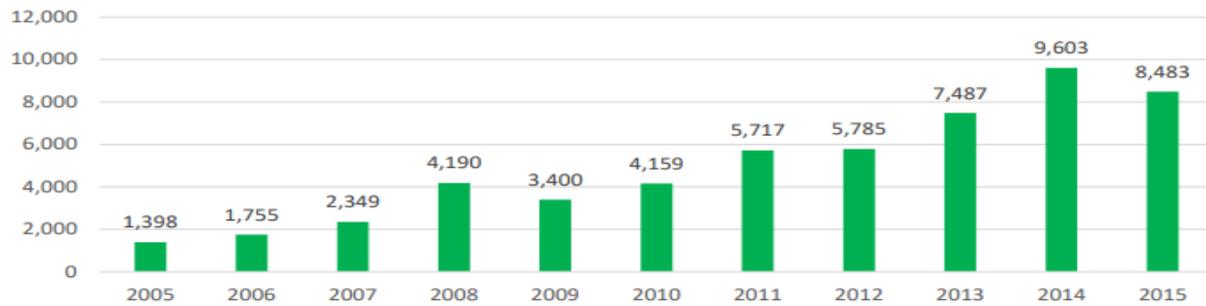
Nigeria also implemented the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) in order to raise the country's standard of living through a variety of reforms, including macroeconomic stability, deregulation, liberalization, privatization, transparency and accountability. In its expectation NEEDS would create seven million new jobs, diversify the economy, boost non-energy exports, increase industrial capacity utilization and improve agricultural productivity. A related initiative at the state level is the State Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (SEEDS)²⁹.

The WTO and the Nigerian Economy

The WTO is a body that deals with majorly trade rules, agreements and negotiation amongst nations. Its rules permits for international commerce amongst nations and its set objects is to promote trade liberalization, non-discrimination amongst nations, ensure predictability and transparency in trade, boost fair and healthy competitions, ensure economic developments in nations and environmental protection as well. But then in the case of the country Nigeria and its objectives that facilitated its membership in the WTO, the WTO rules and agreements as well as its objectives has been stunted because Nigeria being a part of the global south as well as an import dependent nation has faced under representation in the global market because in terms of liberalization of trade, Nigerian goods have lacked the necessary prerequisite to compete with the goods imported from the developed nations comprising majorly of the "global north" and this is because most of the locally made goods are substandard when compared to imported goods. Besides Nigerian manufacturers are some worth still backward when it comes to technological development and even amongst Nigerians, the attitude towards locally produced goods are not encouraging hence the Nigerian position in the face of economic and global trade has remained stunted and the result of this is that the nation has become a dumping ground for imputed goods from developed nations³⁰.

Again, in the face of the WTO keeping to its objectives with Nigeria as a nation it must also be noted that the non-discriminatory objectives have remained unachieved because aside from Nigeria being a nation that cannot compete with the global north, it has also become the dread of foreign investors because of its turbulent environment. These investors see the nation first as an economy that has not been able to catch up with the acceptable trade standards which is discrimination and two, the investors see no environmental protection on the nation and this is one of the covering that the WTO has promised³¹.

In all of this however, the WTO still stands as an organization that wants to achieve all its stated objectives in every of its member countries but then in the case of Nigeria, Ojo Bodunde Adejube and Emmanuel A. Ndaeyo noted that the Nigerian problem with regards to not being able to meet up with trade competitions at the international level is based on the attitude of Nigerians towards exportation and production. Again, they uncovered that, the reason for Nigeria not meeting up with its objectives under its membership in the WTO is not based on its lack of unequal rights or discrimination, but because it has no negotiation skill and this is what this organization stands to promote in the global trade³². For Nigeria, oil has been its greatest revenue generator and this is what has carried the nation for years. The second generator of revenue in the country being agriculture also holds a high baton but in the face of the WTO, Nigeria never engaged the WTO with its agricultural sector and the result of this lies on the fact that this sector was never registered for global trade in the WTO warehouse because the Nigerian participants never saw this as being important.

Information on Nigeria's import of goods from China, 2005-2015

Source: Big-Alabo and MacAlex-Achinolu, “China’s Foreign Policy in Africa and Nigeria Development”, *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*, 10(1), 2022: 9

In 2005 good imported amounted to \$1,398, 2006 it increased to \$1,755, 2007 it still increased to \$2,349, while in 2008 it further increased to \$4,190, in 2009 there was a decrease to \$3,400, and an increase to \$4,159 in 2010, continuing it further increased to \$5,717 in 2011, and further increase in 2012 to \$5,785, and further increase to \$7,487 in 2013, it still increased to \$9,603 in 2014 and a decrease in 2015 to \$8,483.³³

CONCLUSION

Nigeria’s engagement with the **World Trade Organization (WTO)** from **1995 to 2023** reflects both the opportunities and challenges faced by developing countries in the Global South within the global trading system and as Africa’s largest economy and most populous nation, Nigeria has played a significant role in the WTO through the economic policies and programmes it has put in place to ensure **trade facilitation**. However, its journey since 1995-2023 in the WTO has been marked by **structural constraints, institutional limitations and policy inconsistencies**, which have hindered its ability to fully leverage the benefits of WTO membership.

This research appraisal thus reveals that Nigeria’s early years in the WTO were characterized by efforts to align domestic policies with global trade rules, albeit with limited success due to **over-reliance on oil exports and weak infrastructure** its effort has proved abortive in the actualization of global trade under the auspices of the WTO.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Nigeria’s economy has been heavily reliant on oil for decades, accounting for the majority of the country’s revenue. However, this over-reliance on oil has made the economy vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices, leading to economic instability and hindering sustainable growth and development. To achieve sustainable growth and development, it is imperative that Nigeria diversifies her economy. This can be achieved by investing in other sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and services. These sectors have the potential to create new job opportunities, stimulate innovation, and increase the country’s competitiveness in the global market. Agriculture, in particular, has the potential to play a significant role in Nigeria’s economic diversification. With over 70% of the country’s population engaged in agricultural activities, investing in agriculture could lead to increased food production, reduced dependence on food imports, and increased exports. Manufacturing is another sector that has the potential to drive economic growth and development in Nigeria. By investing in manufacturing, Nigeria can reduce her dependence on imported goods, create new job opportunities, and increase her exports. The services sector, including finance, tourism, and information technology, also has the potential to contribute significantly to Nigeria’s economic growth and development. By diversifying her economy, Nigeria can ensure a more stable and prosperous future for her citizens. It will also reduce the country’s vulnerability to external shocks, create new job opportunities, and increase her competitiveness in the global market. Therefore, it is necessary for the Nigerian government to prioritize economic diversification and invest in sectors that have the potential to drive sustainable growth and development.

Furthermore, Nigeria’s economic growth and competitiveness are heavily dependent on the quality of her infrastructure. Unfortunately, the country’s infrastructure has been in a state of disrepair for decades, hindering economic development and increasing trade costs. To address this challenge, Nigeria must prioritize investing in her infrastructure, particularly in modernized ports, roads, and power systems. This investment will have a multiplier effect on the economy, lowering trade costs, improving competitiveness, and creating jobs. Nigeria’s ports are critical to her economy, handling over 80% of the country’s trade. However, the ports are congested, inefficient, and lack

modern facilities. Investing in modernized ports will reduce congestion, lower shipping costs, and increase trade volumes. Also, Nigeria's road network is inadequate, with many roads in poor condition. This increases transportation costs, reduces trade, and hinders economic growth. Investing in roads will improve connectivity, reduce transportation costs, and increase trade. Inclusively, Nigeria's power sector is plagued by inadequate supply, transmission, and distribution. This has hindered economic growth, increased costs, and reduced competitiveness. Investing in modernized power systems will increase power supply, reduce costs, and improve economic competitiveness. By investing in modernized ports, roads, and power systems, Nigeria can lower trade costs and increase trade volumes, improve competitiveness and attract foreign investment, create jobs and stimulate economic growth and increase access to markets and opportunities. Therefore, it is imperative that the Nigerian government prioritizes investing in her infrastructure, particularly in modernized ports, roads, and power systems. This investment will unlock Nigeria's economic potential, drive growth, and improve the lives of her citizens.

Also, Nigeria's bureaucratic institutions are indeed in need of strengthening, and combating corruption is a crucial step in achieving this goal. Corruption has been a persistent challenge in Nigeria, hindering economic growth and development. To strengthen its bureaucratic institutions, Nigeria must prioritize transparency and accountability. Streamlining customs procedures is essential to reducing the opportunities for corruption and increasing the efficiency of trade processes. This can be achieved by simplifying procedures, reducing bureaucratic hurdles, and implementing technology-based solutions. By doing so, Nigeria can increase trade efficiency, reduce corruption, and enhance her economic competitiveness. Building technical capacity is also essential to effectively implement World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements. This requires providing regular training and capacity-building programs for public officials to enhance their technical skills and knowledge. By building technical capacity, Nigeria can ensure that her public officials have the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively implement WTO agreements and enhance her participation in global trade. To achieve these goals, Nigeria must implement key strategies such as enhancing transparency and accountability, capacity building and training, and simplifying procedures and reducing bureaucratic hurdles. By implementing these strategies, Nigeria can strengthen her bureaucratic institutions, reduce corruption, and enhance her participation in global trade. This, in turn, will drive economic growth, increase prosperity, and improve the lives of Nigerian citizens.

Finally, Nigeria's policy inconsistency has been a major hindrance to sustainable development, and it's imperative that the country enhances her policy consistency by developing long-term trade policies. These policies must align with World Trade Organization (WTO) commitments and promote sustainable development. To achieve this, Nigeria needs to develop trade policies that are transparent, predictable, and consistent with WTO rules. Streamlining trade procedures is essential to increasing trade efficiency and reducing corruption. This can be achieved by simplifying trade procedures and reducing bureaucratic hurdles, thereby increasing trade efficiency and reducing corruption. Enhancing trade facilitation is also crucial to reducing trade costs and increasing trade volumes. Implementing trade facilitation measures, such as electronic payment systems and automated customs procedures, can help achieve this goal. Furthermore, Nigeria's trade policies should prioritize sustainable development by promoting exports of value-added products, encouraging foreign direct investment, and protecting the environment. By developing long-term trade policies that align with WTO commitments and promote sustainable development, Nigeria can enhance her policy consistency, increase trade efficiency, and promote sustainable development. This, in turn, will drive economic growth, increase prosperity, and improve the lives of Nigerian citizens.

ENDNOTES

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