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# **Weaving Discord in South African and Nigeria: Managing Imports of Chinese Textile**

## **織出矛盾：南非與奈及利亞如何處理進 口中國紡織品的糾紛**

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## Abstract

This work looks into the factors of state, civil society, and the relation between the two to explain the discrepancy of the responses of African countries to China's growing presence on the continent from the perspective of the African countries themselves. The research focusses on Nigeria and South Africa, China's largest import partners in Africa, in the context of the textile dispute that affected most African nations. The textile dispute pressed the same incentives on all African countries that were affected, yet still they were divided in their reactions. The cases of Nigeria and South Africa show that answer to this riddle lies in the degree to which civil society groups, particularly labour unions, can make the issue salient for politics. Moreover, another key aspect is the degree to which the relation between civil society and the state allows the former to gain the compliance of the latter by invoking incentives that derive from the cooperative aspect of the relation, rather than only the confrontational aspect of it. The implication for the wider China in Africa debate is that instead of viewing China-Africa relations in the context of the continent as a whole, more attention should be paid to the details of the bilateral relations between China and specific African countries and the role that the arrangement of domestic interest groups in said African countries plays in formulating African responses to China. ■

## 摘要

此篇論文以非洲諸國之自身角度出發，探討中國於當地之政府及民間日益擴張的影響力，並闡述當地公私部門間的相互影響，從而歸結出政府及民間不同的回應方式。筆者力引中國於非洲最大的兩大夥伴—南非及奈及利亞作為例證，並探討兩國深具影響力的紡織業糾紛。在此糾紛中深受影響的諸國，原先有著相同的動機，卻產生了不同的反應。南非及奈及利的例子，說明了民間組織扮演的角色，有著決定性的因素，甚至將影響政治層面，其中尤以勞工團體為甚。此外，政府及民間的互動，兩者間的合作抑或競逐程度，也是關鍵所在。與其將非洲大陸視為一個整體，不如逐一探討特定國家及中國的雙邊關係，及各國境內民間利益團體的角色，如此一來，將有助於了解更多中國於非洲拓展影響力的細節，並歸結出關於此議題更廣泛的論述。

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1: Research background

It is unsurprising that as China's economic, military, and political clout grows, so does the interest in theories about how it might act upon its growing presence on the international stage. Hence, scholars and practitioners alike have cultivated a myriad of theories and scenarios concerning how the country might assert itself towards other nations. However intriguing this side of the matter might be, the other side of the issue – how other countries receive China's growing impact on their affairs – is highly relevant as well. After all, in politics it takes two to form a relation. As such, the country that is on the receiving side of China's influence also plays a role in determining the type of relation the two will have. In this research the topic of Africa's reception of China's impact on the continent was chosen as the test case for analysing how the internal dynamics of recipient countries shape their reaction to China. This is because the continent appeared best suited for this type of research given its diversity in levels of development and cultures. This makes it a good measuring point regarding what factors may influence a country's reception of China.

The variety between the characteristics of the African countries also poses a challenge, however. There is much more to African responses to Chinese influence than one would expect at face value. As will be discussed a little further down, the responses of African countries in general can be summarized as disparate, incoherent, and uncoordinated (with the exception of South Africa). This raises an intervening question about what might account for this wide variety in responses, even in cases where the incentives facing the countries are the same.

In order to address the question of what makes for this diversity in African responses to China, this work will take up one concrete issue which affected most of the African countries in a similar way. This issue is the textile dispute with China, which will be elaborated upon further

below. To give the analysis of this subject sufficient concreteness and detail, the focus will be placed on China's two largest importers in Africa (Nigeria and South Africa), and how their respective reactions to the textile dispute were shaped by their domestic politics (Broadman, 2008). This is because the fact that these two countries import the most from China and therefore the impact of textile imports should be most visible in their respective societies. Beyond their extensive trade ties, these countries are also selected for their size and possession of natural resources, which ought to grant them greater leverage vis-à-vis China, compared to other, smaller, not as well-endowed African nations. For example, South Africa has shown to be able to maintain continued Chinese interest, despite having a more mature, regulated market, as well as stricter employment requirements (such as Black Economic Empowerment program) that have deterred some investors (Alden and Wu, 2014). This indicates that these two countries should be able to make some demands towards China. Before going any further into the textile issue, it is necessary to gain a wider understanding of China's role in Africa.

## **1.2: China in Africa**

In the last few decades China's engagement with the continent has expanded drastically. The type of involvement today is different from the past as well. Today, China deals with all kinds of parties, ruling or not. Additionally, beyond party politics, economic cooperation and cultural exchange are now also part of the relation's content. The economic cooperation changed too, as it shifted from purely state led to a two-part approach including state-owned and private companies. The size of trade is different as well, given the large increase in volume (Li, 2008).

For example, between 1999 and 2004 the figure grew substantially, with 48 percent per year. By 2008 China accounted for 40 percent of Africa's exports to Asia. China is also significant on the import side as it accounted for more than a third of imports from Asia to Africa.

In 2004 China's largest import from Africa was oil and natural gas (62% of total merchandise exports to China), its largest export was textiles (36% of total merchandise imports from China) (Broadman, 2008). By 2015 textile had been pushed to second place by machinery and electronics however (Pigato and Tang, 2015). As a result, most of China's activity has been in oil producing states, although South Africa has received much attention as well. By percentage, the most prominent exporters to China were Angola and South Africa. The most important importers by percentage were, as mentioned earlier, Nigeria and South Africa (Broadman, 2008).

As for what brings China to Africa, scholars note that there are a variety of explanations. Wenran Jiang (2008) explains that, although there is no single explanation, there are a number of factors that have an influence. These include: China's high economic growth rate, which fosters demand; China's membership of the WTO and its resulting trade practices; the degree of its energy demand; positive views of China in Africa; decreasing Western influence; and domestic developmental dynamics, which entail an externalization of China's internal business behaviour to Africa. Alden (2007), adds that the competition between Taiwan and China for recognition and Beijing's goal to obtain African votes in multilateral institutions also played a role in China's engagement.

Whether this growing relation is positive or not is a contested issue among scholars. Whereas authors like Deborah Brautigam (2009) argue that the developments have a largely positive impact on the African continent, others highlight a number of problems that China's engagement brings with it. Jiang (2008), for example, mentions the case of Zambia, which entailed accusations towards Chinese businessmen and their alleged exploitation of local workers. The resent even reached politics as the opposition ran an anti-China election platform. During his visit, President Hu responded to the criticisms and offered the country special loans and debt cancellation. In South Africa too, a debate is going on about whether China's economic role is

complementary or competitive to the country. This is since South Africa's manufacturing seemed to have faced job losses because of the Chinese competition. Especially, the small and medium sized firms are claimed to have a direct impact on the lives of Africans. Alden (2007) notes that although African companies might benefit from the presence of these firms because of the flying geese effect, they also suffer under the competition. This is said to be the result of the networks and supply chains to which the Chinese firms have access, which allow these firms to offer lower prices.

What is not contested is the urgency of a united African stance with regard to China's involvement. Many scholars have stressed this is necessary to give Africa the leverage it needs to balance the relationship with China (Rocha, 2007). Nonetheless, at this point, most African countries on themselves lack a coherent or coordinated response to China's engagement of the continent (Again, South Africa is an exception to this). Indeed, Chidaushe (2007) explains that the African approach to China's role on the continent is marked by individual engagements instead of multilateralism. Without a structured approach, the author claims, the allegedly equal relation is skewed in China's favour. However, suggestions have been made that this might come about in due time as more meetings of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) pass (Alden, 2007). As to why this disunity is the case, some theories point to the fact that the African countries are highly dissimilar in terms of their level of development, which translates into vastly different priorities for each country (Ikome, 2010).

### **1.3: The Textile Dispute**

Thus, in general, the African countries are disunited because they all face a somewhat different situation with regard to China. In other words, their dissimilar interests lead them to have dissimilar responses. However, as mentioned before, the matter of the textile industry is an



exception to this as interests seems to align around this issue: the African textile sectors were hard hit in 2005 with the withdrawal of the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA). The repeals caused a sizable increase in Chinese textile imports which persuaded Europe and the US to reinstall a restriction by 2008. During the interim period, many textile manufacturing companies were put out of business or had to lay off large sections of their personnel. The export-oriented textile industry in Africa suffered but survived (Brautigam, 2009).

As such, the Chinese impact on local textile industries has been wholly negative. Deborah Brautigam (2009), singled out the textile industry as the only sector which fared predominantly badly under Chinese competition. Nevertheless, the author mentions that in Lesotho, Mauritius, and Kenya the sector showed signs of recovery until the 2008 global crisis. Hence, we see that the matter of the textile dispute is different from China's general involvement in Africa in that here the interests of the African countries converge rather than differ. Following this reversed logic, one would expect that the similar interests of most African nations would result in a comparable response to the problem among these nations. Yet beyond the Istanbul Declaration, in which the WTO was requested to continue its quota on Chinese textile exports after 2005, no coherent responses have been made (Alden, 2007). More so, the Istanbul Declaration only included South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Zambia, Mauritius, and Kenya. On top of this, it was a Turkish and American led initiative, not an African one (Naumann, 2006). In some cases, African traders even contributed to the problem, as was the case for some Togolese traders who travelled to China to teach Chinese manufactures traditional designs, after which they imported the imitations back to Togo (Sylvanus, 2013).

This makes the textile dispute both an interesting and potentially indicative case concerning the question of why the African nations, even when facing similar incentives, choose different courses of action. In the next section two dimensions that might explain the different



reactions in our case studies, Nigeria and South Africa, will be defined. After, their functioning and the relation they have to each other will be clarified.

#### **1.4: State and Civil Society in Policymaking**

Since the initial focus of this paper was on the reception of Chinese influence in Africa in general, the dimensions in which the textile dispute is to be analysed ought to cover both the state of the respective countries in the form of their governments, and their societies in the shape of their civil societies. This does not mean that they should be seen as separate explanatory variables, but rather as two that interact with each other in either a competitive or cooperative policy process. This interaction, if it concerns dissimilar interests between the two, is characterized by civil society's access to the negotiation table and methods to influence the government, and the state's ability to sail its own course by resisting influence through centralization of power. Alex Thomson (2010), in his introductory work on African politics adds that 'external interests', or third parties, are also highly relevant to determining African decision-making. However, in this paper this dimension will be largely omitted as it focusses on the reception of an 'external interest', namely China's. Thus, as mentioned earlier China will only play a passive role in the research and the country's response will be assessed through the dynamics of domestic interests.

Paying attention to the role of the state in determining the response to the textile dispute is by no means a controversial research decision as the state is the most significant actor in terms of enacting and enforcing policy, and therefore has priority in determining a country's political development (Thomson, 2010). The focus on civil society, on the other hand, is in need of further justification. This is not to say that there is no precedent for taking up this dimension in the analysis, as other scholars such as Thomson (2010), Michael Bratton (1989), and John Makumbe (1998) have underlined the importance of civil society in African politics. Rather it is necessary

to provide a number of concrete examples of civil society's influence in the past, its definition, and an explanation of how civil society might influence policy, in order to create sufficient clarity to facilitate the analysis.

Indeed, Thomson (2010) and Bratton (1989) explain that civil society can be of great explanatory value in Africa as much of the continent's political exchanges take place in society rather than parliament, in part because of the relatively weakness of state institutions in Africa. In the 1990s the significance of civil society in Africa became particularly visible as it played a major role in the wave of democratization attempts that swept the continent. Makumbe (1998) refers as such to the end of apartheid in South Africa, the national strike by Swazi workers in 1997, the creation of Zambia's Movement of Multi-party Democracy (MMD) in 1990, followed by its subsequent coming to power a year later, and Laurent Kabila's victory over Mobutu in Zaire, which had obvious support from civic groups. He also mentions a number of strikes led by trade union congresses in a succession of countries, like Congo and Niger in 1990, and Gabon, Guinea, Cameroon as well as Mauritania in 1991.

Before further clarification can be given concerning civil society's methods to influence policy, an effort should be made to define the concept of civil society. Therefore, we will first cross various pieces of literature on what civil society is and what it is not. From these a working definition for this thesis will be shaped. After, a number of concrete examples of civil society organizations will be given to create a sharp image of the concept. At the last, examples drawn from literature on Nigerian and South African state-civil society relations will be put forward to indicate the methods through which civil society may exert influence over the state.

The various definitions given in the reviewed literature will be discussed starting from the broadest definition followed by increasingly narrow definitions. Thus, the first and widest

definition is given by Habid (2005), who defined civil society as the organized expression of varying interests and ideals which work in the sphere between family, the state, and the market.

Usman (2009), in his book on state and civil society in Nigeria, adds some more detail to this definition. He states that it is the participatory space between the formal apparatus of the state and the informal settings of families and atomized individuals. In this space, groups are formed in order to create associations, express interests and take part in public affairs. Usman notes that the term is too large and insufficiently concrete on its own and should therefore be expressed embedded in a specific context as it would yield concrete instances of civil society groups. Arguably this would help to clarify the definition, hence we will discuss concrete examples of civil society organizations further below.

Cohen and Arato (1997), in their writings on civil society in political theory, give a definition that overlaps with Usman's. They describe civil society as a sphere of social interaction between economy and state, composed of the intimate sphere (especially family), the sphere of associations (especially voluntary associations), social movements, and forms of public communication. In this context, modern civil society comes from types of self-constitution and self-mobilization.

Rainey, Wakunuma, and Stahl (2017) give the greatest amount of detail. This is since they compiled the working definitions of civil society organizations of multiple fields, including academia, policy views, project views, and the EC/EU view. They list that the EC/EU views civil society organizations as being non-state actors that work on a non-profit basis. Moreover, these actors should be non-partisan and non-violent, while aiming to promote the public good. They consist of platforms through which people organize to achieve common goals and ideals. These relate to political, cultural, social, or economic issues. Academia, according to Rainey, Wakunuma, and Stahl sees civil society organizations as non-governmental entities, that work

non-profit. They are self-constituting voluntary organizations. Policy shares this view, with the only difference being that they conceive of them as common cause NGOs, rather than self-constituting voluntary organizations. Those working on projects tend to perceive civil society organizations as being non-government, non-profit or without commercial interest, faith based or carrying an alternative legal status, and having a primary concern in public interest or public wellbeing.

The above-mentioned authors give quite a few characteristics with which we can define what civil society is. However, for the sake of nuance and clarity, it is also necessary to look into what civil society is not. Cohen and Arato (1997), for example, note that civil society is a separate entity from economic and political society. The latter consists of all cooperatives, firms, partnerships, and other organizations of production and distribution. These societies, although rooted in civil society, are not equal to it because their imperatives do not allow them to subordinate their goals (state power or economic gains) to the normative integration and open-ended communication that civil society displays.

Habid (2005) expresses his agreement with this view in his own work. Likewise, Hicks, Janoski and Schwarz (2005) assert that political parties are distinguished as controversial, as some claim that they cannot be seen as part of civil society given their governing function.

With all the above we can define civil society as the following: *a public space beyond economic and state entities, in which interests can be expressed and voluntary groups can be formed to pursue said interest.*

This definition needs some further justification: as can be seen, the feature of non-profit and no commercial interest is left out of the definition. This is because including it would bar journalists and labour unions from civil society. After all, the workers who form a labour union have a commercial interest in mind in the shape of any wage demands they might make.

Journalists too can work on a for profit basis. Nevertheless, these two groups are considered by many scholars to be part of civil society, as will be shown below. The difference with economic actors which are excluded from civil society is that labour unions and journalists can subordinate their economic interests for other normative goals, which would make them suitable by Cohen and Arato's (1997) definition. Furthermore, as will be explained in the chapters on Nigeria and South Africa's background, Labour unions and the media are central elements in the countries' civil societies when it comes to textile dispute.

In line with Habid's (2005) suggestion, some more concrete examples will be given of groups that can be considered part of civil society. Usman (2009) gives four examples of civil society groups: firstly, pro-democracy groups, which are associational entities that claim to represent the public interest or challenge the government on issues related to democracy; second, civic associations, referring to associations that rely on donors to represent interests such as women's rights, media rights, transparency, etc.; thirdly, labour movements, entailing wage labour associations aimed at safeguarding the interests of workers against employers; lastly, professional associations, which Usman sees as associations that defend the interests of skilled and formally educated workers or professionals.

Michael Bratton (1989), while delving into civil society in Africa, lists some more examples such as Christian churches in Kenya, Islamic brotherhoods in Sudan, Lawyers' and Journalists' associations in Ghana and Nigeria, and mineworkers' unions in Zambia and South Africa.

Then, lastly, some examples of civil society methods to influence the state are in order, as this could give direction for the research as to where we can look for points of comparison between the civil societies of Nigeria and South Africa. First off, Habid (2005) mentions in the example of South Africa that civil society comes in two forms: formal NGOs that leverage the

increased freedom after apartheid, and informal survivalist communities created by marginalized groups to fight the implementation of neoliberalism. The former can influence the state (and be influenced by it) through being subcontracted, engaging in partnerships, court action, lobbying, and resistance. The informal marginalized communities share no relation with the state and simply seek to assist people in surviving their poverty.

Usman's (2009) work also gives example of how civil society, particularly labour movements, can influence policy. He mentions that the Nigerian National Labour Congress (NLC), has resorted to negotiation, mass protest or strikes, mobilizations, as well as attempted direct participation in politics to secure its goals. He elaborates on the power of the threat of a mass strike, as he mentions that in 1993 the threat of mass action by the NLC over politically motivated arrests led to the resignation of the head of the military, general Bagangida.

Agbaje's (1993) work on the role of the Nigerian press under military rules shows that civil society, especially the press, can influence public policy in two ways: it can call out malpractices of those in power; and it can positively or negatively cover government policy thus shaping public opinion.

Thus, we have formulated a definition of civil society and explained how it might work to influence policy. Now, we will look to the other side of the dyad where we find the state. Not all states tolerate civil society's attempts to influence policy. In fact, some theories have pointed out that local government councils do not manage to cooperate with civil society organizations. The two tend to work against, rather than with each other (Olowu, 2005). Tordoff (1984) gave three reasons why the state at times seeks to limit the role of interest groups, like labour unions: Firstly, the state, being the main employer of the country, has a vested interest against wage demands; secondly, these wage demands can have an inflationary effect on the economy if they are met;

they may also widen the urban-rural gap; lastly, strong labour unions can pose a political challenge to the state.

The latter incentive is particularly strong in centralized states. In these states political power has withdrawn from civil society and ‘peripheral’ state institutions and usually coalesces in the executive, like the presidential or prime ministerial office. These kinds of states often aim to maintain this status quo by curbing source of power that might rival their own. Civil society is not exempt from this tendency as labour unions, professional organizations and other such organizations tend to be either co-opted or kept in check by the state. Thus, centralized states tend not to listen to civil society and create a rift between the former and latter (Thomson, 2010).

### **1.5: Research Question**

Thus, we have addressed: the wider question of why there are such inexplicably mixed responses in Africa concerning China’s influence, the exceptional role that the textile industry can play in explaining this matter, as well as the theories concerning state and civil society that can help to approach our question. All the above culminates in the proposed research question of the thesis, which is the following: *How does the difference in the state and civil society between Nigeria and South Africa relate to the difference in responses to the textile dispute with China in Nigeria and South Africa?* To clarify, the word ‘state’ in this question refers to the nature of the state and its relation to civil society as explained in the previous section.

Hopefully, answering this question will not only yield new within-case findings, but also findings that are generalizable to the wider issue of what makes for the difference in African responses to China. If these findings are indeed generalizable, then it could also shed light on the wider subject of African decision-making. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the textile dispute is an odd case because it entails a difference in response despite similar economic incentives. By



showing what the mechanics behind the issue are, knowledge may be gained on what truly makes African countries tick. Such a finding could indicate that the incentive structure of African countries is markedly different from most developed states. Lastly, the findings could help to emphasize the point that Africa cannot be taken as a whole when discussing the politics of the region, given the wide range of differences between the African states. This would be the intended contribution of the proposed research to the academic debate.

## **1.6: Methodology**

Then, the methodology that will be used to approach the questions mentioned earlier will consist of document analysis in the framework of a comparative case study. The reason for this selection is twofold: firstly, document analysis can provide a convincing account without necessarily demanding a physical presence in the countries under investigation; secondly, comparative research requires that data collection methods and data categories between the cases are comparable, a requirement which document analysis can easily fulfil.

In more detail, what does document analysis entail? Document analysis entails a systematic procedure for evaluating documents of both physical and electronic nature. In doing so, almost any source can be used in the analysis, provided that they meet the criteria for our purpose. As for what these criteria consist of, Bowen mentions that the overall range of documents should come from different sources to prevent selection bias. Other dimensions in which the value of the document can be assessed are: the general relevance to the topic at hand; the document's credibility; its authenticity; accuracy; and its representativeness. These dimensions can be assessed by looking at the source's focus (on the topic in general or a specific aspect of it), its target audience, intended purpose, and its author. For certain documents methodology may be of relevance too.

For our purpose these criteria limit the documents that are eligible for this research to the following categories: scholarly literature on the subject, research reports that rely on documented sources or interviews with relevant individuals, documents or press statements by relevant labour unions in the two countries, official and press statements by the respective governments of Nigeria and South Africa, and news articles by papers that publish in either Nigeria or South Africa. Regarding the newspapers it should be noted that local publications are a minimal requirement for the reason that this can be said to be a form of exerting influence as it may shape public opinion on the issue. Furthermore, in order to avoid biases that might be inherent to certain papers, it would be best to cover a wide enough variety of papers to filter out such biases that may distort the image of the events.

What we hope to gain from the documents is data, context and historical insights, which will help us to gain perspectives and facts on our topic. This in turn may help to narrow down the potential factors until we arrive at a satisfactory explanation. Furthermore, Bowen points out that documents can also be complementary to each other as they may prove or disprove the findings of other documents, thus providing a more accurate image. There is, however, a limitation to this method: Research based upon document analysis must find ways to deal with low retrievability. This problem might occur when it comes to government documents, given that these may be confidential or not available outside the country of origin. One way around this problem is to rely on secondary sources that mention these documents (Bowen, 2009).

In follow up, it is necessary to determine how document analysis will apply to our comparative research framework. First, we must have a clear definition of what a comparative study is. This definition we find in Alan Bryman's book. He quotes a previous work by Hantrais (1995), which states that comparative research is conducted: "when individuals or teams set out to examine particular issues or phenomena in two or more countries with the express intention of

comparing their manifestations in different socio-cultural settings (institutions, customs, traditions, value systems, life styles, language, thought patterns), using the same research instruments either to carry out secondary analysis of national data or to conduct new empirical work. The aim may be to seek explanations for similarities and differences or to gain a greater awareness and a deeper understanding of social realities in different national contexts.”

In the context of our topic this would consist of a comparison between Nigeria and South Africa in terms of the media and labour unions ability to influence policy against the state’s ability to act unilaterally through centralization of power and using document analysis in both cases. For example, the research will look into the actions undertaken by labour unions and how the government responded to these actions. Also, attention will be payed to the media coverage of dispute, in terms of whether it was pro-textile, against the local textile industry, its workers and advocates, divided, or neutral. On the other hand, the statuses of these parts of civil society vis-à-vis their governments are to be compared as well. This will show whether the governments are open to negotiation with the former or seek to hold them off. Naturally, the degree of centralization of each government is also given due consideration. The combination of these should give a complete picture concerning the role of civil society and the state in determining Nigeria and South Africa’s reaction to the textile dispute. As such, the comparative framework should not create any complex problems for the intended research. Nevertheless, we should still account for the comparability of the two cases. In the case of document analysis this means that the documents compared should be of similar organizations in the two countries (Nigerian government documents compared to South African government documents, for example). Naturally, they should also concern the same topic (textile industry to textile industry, civil society to civil society, etc.) (Bryman, 2012).

## **Chapter 2: South Africa, Nigeria and Chinese Textile**

### **2.1: China's Relation with South Africa and Nigeria**

Now that the background of the general issue has been set, it is possible to go in deeper and engage the context of our case study countries Nigeria and South Africa. In the following chapter the general relation between Nigeria and China, as well as South Africa and China will be discussed. Moreover, the onset of and government reaction to the textile disputes in the two countries will be looked into. As such this chapter will not only give information for initial comparison but also sets the stage for the in-depth analysis of how the two countries came to their current positions. We shall start with the South Africa-China dyad's background.

The formal ties between Beijing and Pretoria were initiated after the end of apartheid and opened in 1998. The early relation was one of cooperation that culminated in the signing of the Pretoria Declaration on partnership relations in 2000 followed by the creation of a strategic partnership in 2004. The relation continued to improve, especially in the light of Beijing's performance under the 2008 global crisis (Alden and Wu, 2014; Bradley, 2016). On top of this, South Africa was able to enter the BRICS group on China's invitation. As such, Herman Wasserman (2012) claims that in South Africa's eyes the relation between itself and China is part of a geopolitical shift towards the global South, particularly the BRICS. He also explains that for China South Africa's status as the largest trade partner on the continent and its sizable mineral deposits help to reinforce the relation. For example, between the years of 2006 and 2011, mineral products accounted for over 60% of China's imports from South Africa (Bradley, 2016).

Much of the closeness and stability in the relation between the two countries comes from the strength of their trade relationship. This notion was cemented at the South African side in 2009 when trade from other countries dropped and China became its most important trading partner, as a cause of the global crisis and in line with the ANC's international strategy for

economic engagement and investment. To give a concrete image of this growth in trade: from 1996 to 2011, the share of the trade between the two nations of South Africa's total trade figure increased from 1,3% to over 13% (Alden and Wu, 2014; Bradley, 2016).

In 2010 the strategic partnership was expanded by President Zuma and President Hu into a comprehensive strategic partnership, which entailed that the two countries were to initiate cooperation in various fields, such as: culture, education, media, health, and tourism. Furthermore, documents were signed concerning cooperation in solar power, iron ore, finance, and telecommunication. Alison Bradley (2016) notes that during this event Zuma brought a delegation that was larger than any delegation South Africa had brought before, consisting of 13 ministers and over 350 business executives and entrepreneurs. This too is indicative of the importance that South Africa attaches to the relationship.

There is, however, a counter side to the positive aspects of the relation. For example, China can adversely affect South Africa's economic growth and employment in two ways: directly, by means of imports which overtake domestic production; and indirectly, by competing over markets with South African exports (Rangasamy and Swanepoel, 2011). Indeed, the Chinese investments have been criticized for harming domestic production. For one, South African business asserts that the country is exporting too much mineral resources and imports too much manufactured products from China. As a result, the trade relation had no positive impact on the country's unemployment level. In fact, labour-intensive sectors have taken losses because of the relation.

Also abroad, in its own neighbourhood, South Africa experiences pressure from Chinese competition. Jenkins and Edwards (2015), for example, note that South Africa is at risk of displacement as it is a middle-income country, which means that it is likely to have a manufacturing base which is developed but not specialized enough to compete. Indeed, the

authors' findings show that South Africa's market share in 2001 to 2010 in various Sub Saharan countries would have been higher if it had not been for Chinese competition. Additionally, they found that low-tech products were affected most. Fortunately, the impact on South Africa's overall exports would be relatively small, considering the low percentage that these goods make up. Lastly, the imbalance in the relation has resulted in some negative attitudes: only 45% of South Africans think positively of China and Mbeki called Chinese practices "neo-colonial, while Zuma called them unsustainable. These criticisms were limited, however, because of South Africa's reliance on Chinese investment (Bradley, 2016).

In Nigeria's case, the relation can be traced back to an earlier point in time as formal bilateral relations between Nigeria and China started in 1971. Hereafter, the relations between the two countries grew to the point that Nigeria was China's fourth largest trade partner in Africa, in 2008. Additionally, already in 2002 Nigeria's prominence was noticeable as the country was only second to South Africa in terms of Chinese investment in Sub-Saharan Africa (Ikhuoria, 2010). This shift was noteworthy because past precedent showed that Nigeria tended to become more Western oriented after each democratization wave. After the most recent one, however, it focused on China (Obiorah, Kew, and Tanko, 2008; Seteolu and Oshodi, 2017).

The Chinese engagement is in many respects similar to what has been observed in other African countries; unconditional aid and oil investment are at the centre of the official relationship. This is illustrated by the 2006 investment by China's largest off-shore oil producer, worth 2.3billion US dollar. Moreover, during the same period, China followed up the oil investment with a planned 4-billion-dollar investment in various infrastructure projects related to the oil sector. Beyond the oil sector China also made a deal worth 8.3 billion to rebuild the Lagos-Kano railway. Additionally, Chinese firms set forth 200 million US dollar worth of preferential buyers' credit to create Nigeria's first communications satellite. Thus, the difference

in projected investment in Nigeria between 2001 and 2006 was less than 2 billion in the former year versus 9.5 billion in 2006. The last figure made up 31 percent of all of China's offshore contracted projects (Gbadamosi and Oniku, 2009). Additionally, the Nigerian and Chinese government engaged in a strategic partnership in 2005. Moreover, Setelu and Oshodi (2017) also state that according to polls conducted by the international polling firm GlobalScan in 2005, 68% of the Nigerians interviewed held a positive view of China. Other polls mentioned by the authors suggested even higher numbers, yet it should be noted that the demographics and geography of the polls was not available to the authors.

However, there is also a downside to Nigerian-Chinese relations, which is the impact of Chinese imports on the local market. Alden (2007) states that small and medium sized Chinese firms have a direct impact on the lives of Africans. He mentions one such case in Nigeria, when Chinese companies opened three wholesale and retail shopping centres in major cities. This resulted in protest from local Nigerian traders, which escalated to the point that police intervention was needed. The centres were temporarily closed after the event. The protest reflected the fact that the cheap Chinese imports were devastating to consumer product industries, especially in Kano and Kaduna. In these cities, six out of seven manufacturers had to close their doors in 2006, part of which was the result of Chinese goods that entered the country through smugglers or concessionary trade deals (Obiorah, Kew, and Tanko, 2008).

In some cases, the Chinese businesspeople engaged in such smuggling practices themselves, as noted by the complaints of Nigeria's Customs Department in 2006, which stated that Chinese traders in the country violated the import and export rules. The customs department arrested a number of Chinese businesspeople because of their involvement in a smuggling operation that concerned thirty trailers of goods (Obiorah, Kew, and Tanko, 2008). Because smuggling has become the norm for many traders, the government loses out on much of the



import duty revenue (Ikhouria, 2010). In addition, beyond textiles, illegal Chinese business extended to pirated CD, video, and audio production as well, as observed in 2004 (Obiorah, Kew, and Tanko, 2008). Bad labour practices by Chinese is also an issue that was brought up at multiple moments in time, however Seteolu and Oshodi (2017) note that that much of the debate is media led, which entails that not all the criticisms are grounded. The authors confirm that there have been cases of bad labour practices but nuance this matter by adding that this pertains only to specific companies. Regardless, the Nigerian labour unions (those for furniture, wood workers, construction, and civil engineering) took up the issue and gave the government a 14-day ultimatum to address the problem. The government, however, rejected the criticism. Hence, it can be said that this downside did not affect the relation significantly.

At face value, we see that the South Africa-China dyad and the Nigeria-China dyad have a number of aspects in common: both involve cordial relations, both have received substantial benefits from China in the form of investment and political cooperation, as well as the fact that in both cases on the African side local manufacturing in industry suffered notably from Chinese competition. The main differences seem to be that In Nigeria, despite that Chinese competition takes a more illegitimate form because of the smuggling issue, public approval seems more favourable towards China. In South Africa, however, regardless of the fact that much of the imports are legal (although legal trade occurred as well), rather than smuggled, the population is more divided in terms of its views on China.

## **2.2: The Chinese Textile Disputes in Nigeria and South Africa**

Now, to focus on the textile dispute, the first section shall again begin with South Africa. As mentioned in the previous part, China can adversely affect South Africa's economic growth and employment in two ways: directly, by means of imports which overtake domestic production;

and indirectly, by competing with South African exports (Rangasamy and Swanepoel, 2011). South Africa's textile industry faced the former problem. The roots of this problem can be found between 1999 and 2002, when the South African Rand was devaluated which prompted many manufacturers to focus on exporting to the US for a higher profit, although they were unable to meet both export and domestic demand. Furthermore, illegal imports, domestic competition which reduced prices, firms turning to export to maintain capacity, also drove manufacturers to focus on foreign markets instead of the domestic one. Around the same time, the tariffs on yarn fell by 20 percentage points, fabric tariffs by 28 percentage points, and made-up household textiles tariffs were halved in this period, thus the overall the import tariff of clothing was reduced to a flat 40 percent (Thoburn and Roberts, 2004; Morris and Einhorn, 2008). This still relatively high percentage did not help however, since the South African wages were kept comparatively high because of the strength of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) (Pillay, 2006). This led to a price discrepancy with Chinese products that allowed Chinese imports to endure the tariff, while staying well below South African price levels. The combination of these factors allowed foreign manufacturers to enter the market.

Then, in 2003 the Rand strengthened again, while at the same time the Multi-Fibre Agreement was repealed. Moreover, the South African government was reluctant to subsidize its clothing exports (Morris and Einhorn, 2008). This caused South African textile producers to be pushed out of markets in the EU and US by Chinese competition as well as their home market. This initial refusal by the South Africa government to support the textile sector can traced back to its believe that its economic and political objectives required it to insist on international openness, as such a stance would help to resolve profitability and productivity shortcomings in the manufacturing sector. Secondly, the South African government also held the conviction that it could not spare the resources to uphold uncompetitive industries by means of protectionist or

import substitution schemes. Thirdly, the government thought that the textile industry was not sustainable altogether in its early 2000s form, and therefore had to change itself (Van Der Westerhuizen, 2006).

At this point, in 2005, clothing made in China, including Hong Kong, had claimed 78.8 percent of the total clothing imports (Morris and Einhorn, 2008). As a result, the employment in the industry, which used to be the sixth largest employer in the manufacturing sector, decreased from 70,500 to 50,500 between 2003 and 2007, according to Fanie Herman (2011). The biggest losers of these were those in the textile sub-sectors such as spinning, weaving and finishing. The employment in these sectors in 2001 was 45 percent lower compared to 1996. Moreover, large, vertically integrated firms in general took a lion share of the losses, since many of restructuring entailed upgrades that reduced the workforce (Thoburn and Roberts, 2004).

In the South African case we see a government response directed at engaging China: In 2002 the labour unions led by COSATU, the opposition party, media, and industrial lobbyists voiced accusations of unfair dumping (Herman, 2011). COSATU's complaint against the government, regardless of the alliance it shares with said government, can be explained by the fact that the labour congress has a vested interest in the textile issue. This is since COSATU suffered from a shirking membership base resulting from the job losses in the textile sector (Pillay, 2006). In 2005 these domestic constituencies applied for quotas to be imposed on the Chinese imports (among other requirements). The South African government heeded the calls of the protesting groups; a negotiation was started. In this negotiation the president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, fulfilled the role of the Chief of Government (COG), the main negotiator vis-à-vis the Chinese (Herman, 2011).

Brautigam (2009) states that the South African government engaged China to settle a two-year voluntary export restraint. Furthermore, China also offered 31 billion US dollar worth of

skill-building in the South African textile industry. These compromises were to no avail as the South African government did not spend the money on the textile industry, and the quotas did not boost the performance of the sector. On top of this, the continued demand for Chinese textiles in South Africa led to increased smuggling of these goods. Moreover, South African retailers also started to legally import cheap textiles from Mauritius, Lesotho, Bangladesh, and Malaysia (Lee, 2014). Thus, although the gains of the negotiation were wasted, it can be said that there was a response to the matter of the Chinese imports.

In Nigeria's case too, wider problems related to the trade relation affected the textile industry. In Nigeria is concerns the problem of both legal and illicit Chinese competition: During the 80s and 90s the Nigerian textile industry was already failing, despite officially having little foreign competitors in the domestic market (Bankole, Babatunde, and Kilishi, 2014). This is since in this period the Nigerian textile industry was protected by a prohibition. For example, in Brooks and Simon's (2012) article it is mentioned that in the year 1989 almost 96 percent of all textiles tariff lines faced import prohibitions in a bid to shield domestic producers. Regardless, it is estimated that 75 to 80 percent of the clothing exported to West-Africa was smuggled into Nigeria given that not all countries in the region have a textile import prohibition and the weak implementation of the ban. Additionally, the smuggling is largely a consequence of the lack of wealth of most Nigerians, which keeps cheap contraband clothing in demand. (Brooks and Simon, 2012). The problems continued into 2015. One consequence of these problems we find in the 2015 Kano protest, where the protestors marched to the local Emir's palace to express their stance against the Chinese imports (Seteolu, and Oshodi, 2017).

Beyond smuggling, amongst the causes for the demise of the Nigerian textile industry are the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), which for a brief period of time allowed for foreign competitors to enter the market; the end of the MFA; and the initiation of the WTO textile and

clothing agreement from 1995-2005 onwards, which removed the globally imposed quota system concerning the textile industry; and the Inability of the Nigerian textile sector to live up to modern production technology standards. This resulted in relatively high production costs, pricing, and even lacking quality, which made the sector uncompetitive. In turn, this caused Nigerian consumers to grow a preference for foreign made textiles. Hence, the local market was lost to the sector and its collapse became almost certain.

These factors caused Nigeria's textile industry to decline as the years went by. By the early 2000s the Nigerian share of the West African market was reduced to 27 percent. Moreover, only 45 out of an estimated 70 companies were active in December 2004. Worse still, only 28 percent of the installed capacity was used on average. In consequence, the contribution of the sector to GDP became less than one percent and 150000 employees had been laid off by 2004. Bankole, Babatunde and Kilishi (2014) claim that the malaise in the sector and pressure from the sectors representatives has shaped the believe amongst some policy makers that government support is required for the survival of the industry.

In sum, we see that despite the positive factors in the relation, the effects of the competition of Chinese imports on the textile industry can be considered an incentive for the Nigerian government to intervene. This is even more so the case if one considers the discontent that the demise of the textile industry yielded. For example, beyond civil protest, regional politics has been affected by the issue as well as. Political leaders at this level have voiced criticism towards the federal government (Seteolu, and Oshodi, 2017). On top of this, there is also the loss of revenue because of the smuggling practices of some Chinese traders. Given that these practices are direct violations of the law, they would make an obvious point of complaint.

As for the government's actual reaction to this problem: beyond the implementation of an import ban in 2004-2005, the discussion of the matter in the senate, and temporary closures, the

government has made no efforts to address the matter or to discuss it with China. The discussion in the senate, mentioned by Alden (2007), is not mentioned in any other scholarly source. This shows that the momentum most likely stayed within the walls of the senate building. Likewise, the 2004-2005 ban includes a licensing requirement for importing an outlawed product. The allocation process of these licenses is said to be lacking in transparency (Ikhouria, 2010). The problem of continued smuggling will probably also render the ban ineffective. Concerning these smuggling practices, it can also be said that the government reaction was limited. For example, in 2003 authorities closed the Ikoyi Chinese market because of smuggling charges, but it was opened again later for obscure reasons (Ikhouria, 2010). Thus, during the same timeframe that the South African government came to the decision to negotiate with China, the Nigerian government's response can be summarized as one of neglect adorned with ineffective temporary solutions to still critique. It is only under the current administration, led by president Buhari, that more substantial initiatives are being shaped, although in many regards this is still work in progress (Bello, 2017).

These histories uncover some overlap between the cases: firstly, in Nigeria and South Africa the textile industry laboured under inherent inefficiency that made them unable to compete; secondly, the government has displayed unwillingness to solve the matter in both instances; thirdly, in either case substantial resistance was mounted against the prevailing status quo, in order to bring about government intervention. The chief difference lies in the dissimilar responses between the two, as foreshadowed in the research question. In South Africa the government was moved to intervene and even achieved an initial victory, while in Nigeria the issue was put off with half-hearted attempts until much later. To elaborate on this discrepancy, in the next chapters the events in both countries will be looked at more deeply from a civil society vis-à-vis the state perspective in order to explain why one side succeeded and the other did not.

## **Chapter 3: Civil Society**

### **3.1: Civil Society in Nigeria and South Africa**

Now we will look into the status of civil society in Nigeria and South Africa in more detail. With this information we can shape a general image of the differences and similarities between the Nigerian and South African government and their relations with their domestic civil societies. Hereafter the key parts of the civil societies with regard to the dispute with China will be identified to further slim down the focus of this research. After, a general description will be given of the governments' attitude towards civil society to shape a tentative image of the differences between these key groups in the two countries. Lastly, the role of media and labour unions in determining the outcome of the dispute will be elaborated upon in more detail. First of all, we will look into Nigeria.

Ikelegbe (2013) distinguishes three major types of civil society organizations in Nigeria: Primary or Primordial organizations, which are identity-based groups; secondary or middle level associations, referring to socio-economic, professional, or labour based groups; and NGOs, which make up the largest number of organizations. Civil society organizations of each type can combine their strength to form platforms, such as the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) or the Trade Union Congress which comprise the labour unions. These platforms are used to organize nation-wide actions such as the protests against the government's stance on minimum wage and fuel subsidies.

He also lists a number of challenges for civil society organizations in Nigeria: many organizations are divided among regional, religious, and other partisan lines, thus making them less capable of cooperation. Secondly, many organizations suffer from internal management competition and business, wealthy and aristocratic interests that inhibit formation. Weak management and incompetence also plays a role. Moreover, the failure of some organizations to



organize themselves on a national level worked to their detriment since national formation allows for resource aggregation and engagement of the state on its own level. Since the most recent democratization wave, civil society lost some influential leaders, because they went into politics or joined the government.

Although the relation between the state and civil society has improved since the advent of democracy, the relation is still rather sour and marked by mutual distrust. For example, the state may seek to co-opt leaders or penetrate the leadership to ensure either control or division with the leadership. This usually happens through a form of patronage. Worse still, the state may attempt to harass the leaders. The government is distrustful of civil society organizations in part because of their anti-government tendencies which were displayed in the latter's fight against the military government. Beyond this, the government also mistrusts civil society organizations because they are viewed as special interest groups that do not necessarily care for the national interest.

Lastly, Ikelegbe (2013) states that the policy influence of civil society is generally low. Only national organizations such as labour unions and professional organizations hold the ability to gain some influence. On their part, civil society organizations tend to look at the government as lacking responsiveness towards urgent civilian needs, mostly as a result of corruption, abuse of power, and self-interest. Differences in ideology, mode of operation and styles also worsen relations between the two.

In South Africa we can see some similarities. Lehman (2008) mentions that, in the years after apartheid, the changes in interest groups have been related to the growth of civil society and its less than optimal relation with the South African state, as well as the initiation of neo-liberal economic policies by the latter. The author states that scholars before him have pointed out that the ANC elites make use of the power of the state to neutralize the opposition against the neo-liberal policies. This is usually done by ANC occupation of structures of economic power.

Regardless, large well-funded NGOs can still engage the government over policies at various points in the policy process. The smaller organizations, however, suffered from declining funding since 1994. They are forced to resort mostly to informal channels. Thus, Lehman refers to the scholarly debate which says that despite tolerance for civil society organization activities, the government has attempted to co-opt the organizations in the decision-making structure under the state. Thus, after apartheid, many organizations found themselves with less funding and (similar to the Nigerian case) with less leaders, as the latter group left for government positions.

Moreover, the implementation and subsequent failure of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) program, caused a severe reduction of civil society organizations in policy circles in the early 2000s. It is unclear, however, if this was a result of the chaos or the centralist tendencies of the government. This widened the distance between state and civil society. Additionally, the government has been highly critical of civil society organizations (particularly NGOs), as they criticized them for lacking democratic accountability. This criticism was most strongly directed against foreign organizations. President Mbeki stated in 2005 that these organizations not only lacked accountability but also influenced the agendas of domestic organizations (Lehman, 2008).

Thus, we see that in both the Nigerian and South African case civil society sustained a weakening because of the co-optation of leaders by the government or decisions by the former to join the government after democratization. Another similarity is that primarily the larger organizations are the ones that can influence policy at least to some degree. The smaller organizations in the two countries are either forced to resort to informal engagement or to limit their actions to the local level. The last similarity is that both governments hold a degree of disdain for civil society, as they see the groups as a challenge to party interests, the national interests, and even to democratic accountability. The main difference lies in the degree to which

the two governments act against civil society. Whereas the South African government only seeks to control the policy process and co-opt leaders, the Nigerian government has shown to be willing to not only apply these strategies but also to harass and inhibit attempts by civil society to undertake action.

### **3.2: Labour Unions and the Media in Nigeria and South Africa**

Then, to go into more detail, what are the key civil society groups in Nigeria and South Africa? For the Nigerian case we can look back at the work of Seteolu and Oshodi (2017), which was mentioned earlier. They stated that the debate surrounding China's role in Nigeria is mainly led by the media. Moreover, in cases of bad labour practices or in the textile dispute at large, the workers and their unions took the lead in taking action against the issues at hand. This view seems to be shared by Remi Aiyede (2003), who states that in the Fourth Republic of Nigeria most of civil society lost its democratic drive, with the exception of the labour unions and the media. As for South Africa, in another work that this paper came across the key constituents were said to be the labour unions, the opposition party, the media, industrial lobbyists and industrial traders (Herman, 2011). For our purposes the opposition party as well as the industrial traders and their lobbyists will be mostly excluded from the comparison as they are not seen as part of civil society.

Firstly, we shall look into the relation between the Nigerian labour unions and the media with their government, starting from the Fourth Republic at the end of the 1990s. In this period, the Nigerian government initiated a number of structural reforms in favour of privatization, deregulation, and commercialization. Multiple policy points were challenged by the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) on grounds that they reduced subsidies and social welfare. Thus, in response the NLC organized several general strikes between 2000 and 2007. The author mentions

that strikes remain the mainstay of engaging industrial conflicts in Nigeria. In turn, the Nigerian government counteracted this tendency with the 2005 Trade Union Act, which outlawed strikes. Transgression of this law results in a six-month prison term or a 10000 Naira fine. Moreover, the law also stated that if a trade union engages in collective bargaining, it must have an electoral college to elect the members that will represent the trade union in question. This could form a problem to trade unions as the law does not specify what the electoral college should entail, thus making it possible for the state or employers to manipulate criteria, the author mentions. Lastly, the act also shifts compulsory union membership into voluntary membership, while maintaining the minimum quota for constituting a union at 50 members (Akinwale, 2011).

However, before this law came into place, strikes were already rejected by the government on certain occasions. Akinwale mentions the example of the 2003 NLC strike which was judged as illegitimate by the Ikeja High Court. The government sent out a police force to end the strike, which costed the lives of nine people and multiple arrests nation-wide.

The media was better off during this period, judging by the account of Olukoyun (2004). He states that in Nigeria during the onset of the Fourth Republic the media has been burdened with the task of monitoring and maintaining accountability of the government vis-à-vis the people in the 1999 constitution. This suits the Nigerian press community well, as the author mentions it resembles the most enduring and fearless part of Nigeria's civil society. Another feature that strengthens the media in Nigeria is the fact that it is the largest press community in Africa. The most prominent newspapers of this community are: Punch, Guardian, Nigerian Tribune, This Day, Post Express, and The Vanguard. Ethnic divisions, and corruption still form problems concerning the quality of the media, however because of the diversity of the media, the sector monitors itself. As such, corruption and biased reporting is at times called out by competing media firms. This, however, does not mean that the pressure on the media is negligible. For example, Reporters

Without Borders has reported on numerous instances in which the Nigerian media has suffered harassment by state actors (Reporters Without Borders, 2005, 2006, 2015 and 2017).

In South Africa the role of labour unions, although also under strain, is clearly much more secure. This much can be learned from the work of Janet Cherry (2006) on the policy influence of COSATU. She lists four methods through which COSATU can attempt to engage the government: through negotiations in Nedlac, advocacy through contributions to parliament or negotiations with government departments, the political process available at the Tripartite Alliance, and mass mobilization.

Cherry explains that Nedlac is the institutional forum for negotiation between government, labour and business interests. She mentions that it has helped COSATU ensure that enacted policies were in labour's interest. For example, in the first five years after apartheid it made for some of the most labour oriented policies in the world. Even during the early neo-liberal turn of the government, COSATU was able to come to an agreement with business leaders, which was taken through Nedlac. This agreement, the LRA Amendment, was passed in 2002 and gave employees in the larger firms the right to strike against retrenchments and to gain support from solidarity strikes. Moreover, Nedlac increases transparency as policy is negotiated with all involved parties present, thus reducing closed-door lobbying. On the downside, not that many workers have a clear understanding of Nedlac and the majority has not received report-back from it. Likewise, Nedlac is only a consultative body, thus the government can still decide to move unilaterally as it did with the GEAR program.

The second point, contributions to parliament and engaging departments of government, have similarly mixed results. The former works through contesting issues in parliament that concern COSATU's labour constituents. COSATU has the benefit of strengthening these submissions with threats of mass mobilization. This does not mean that it wins all policy contests,

but it does not give away any points without attempting to influence them either. Moreover, the ANC majority is said to have been highly beneficial to COSATU in the first five years post-apartheid, according to the organization itself. The organization's relation to various departments of government is mainly dependent on which department one looks at. For example, the author notes that whereas the ministry of finance does not consider COSATU at all and takes policy decisions unilaterally, the ministry of labour often negotiates extensively with COSATU.

Lastly, The Tripartite Alliance functions as the discussion forum between the South African Communist Party (SACP), the ANC, and COSATU. For most part, it only grants wide statements of agreement and a platform to discuss any disagreements, but in many cases the policies that the ANC brings to the negotiation table are presented as *fait accompli*. Part of the discrepancy comes from the lack of a clear agreement within the group. Hence, the alliance is excluded from most government actions (Cherry, 2006).

The media's position with regard to the government is a rather contentious one in South Africa. For example, Duncan (2003) States that the ANC has accused the media of over-commercialization, which is said to have resulted in an expansion of the media without an expansion of diversity. Thus, the media is said to curtail its own freedom of expression. The government has also expressed that the people are increasingly less able to articulate their ambitions through the media. Therefore, the government has ventured to create a publicly funded media alongside the private media. Such initiatives have been implemented in the radio and broadcasting sections but print media has shown to be beyond reach as it is self-regulated.

Concerning the media's response, the author noted that it is difficult to gain one representative image as it involves multiple actors. Thus, she divided the reaction into two camps: those who view the government's position with suspicion, as they consider it an attempt to take away the monitoring capacity of the media by reducing independence and legitimacy; and those

who are willing to cooperate depending on how the concept of national interest (which the government uses to critique the media) is negotiated and defined (Duncan, 2003).

In sum, in both cases the government seems to be at odds with their domestic labour unions over policies, which at times results in unilateral action by these governments. However, the South African government has in the past allowed COSATU to gain a strong foothold in the country and also seems to take the union serious as a partner in policy making and as a force in both society and politics. In contrast, the Nigerian government seems to consider its domestic labour unions merely as a nuisance. This becomes clear from its intolerant stance vis-à-vis union action. It sought to curb the influence of the unions, thus putting these unions on the defensive. This has reduced the unions' options and ability to influence the government, compared to their South African counterparts. The media groups in both countries seem to be able to resist attempts by their governments to influence them, be it that in Nigeria this task is much more tedious and risky compared to South Africa. Especially, the printed media (the press) has shown to be rather resilient against government influence. This would appear to be largely the result of its ability to be self-regulating. In South Africa this has allowed the printed press to resist attempts by the South African government to create a competing public media. In Nigeria it allowed the press to resist co-optation through corruption, intimidation by means of harassment, and to balance against its own community biases. The difference between the two is mainly found in such limitations: The South African press is said to lack diversity because it is too centralized on commercial ends, while the Nigerian press is said to be divided along sub-national identities and has to run a risk of inviting punitive action by powerful actors.



	South Africa	Nigeria	Both
Civil Society	Governmental effort to hold control of policy process vis-à-vis civil society	Government effort to inhibit civil society's ability to undertake action  State harassment of civil society	Loss of leaders to government  Access to national level policy influence limited to larger organizations  Degree of disdain for civil society by government  Co-optation of civil society leaders
Media	Perceived lack of diversity  Government attempts to create a competing public press	Risks of corruption, harassment, and community biases	Press resilience against government influence through self-regulation
Labour Unions	Strong unions grown out of favourable past relation with government  Government is willing negotiate with unions	State intolerance towards union action  Attempts to curb union influence	Disagreement with unions invites unilateral action by the state

*Table 1: Civil society, media, and labour unions compared in Nigeria and South Africa*

### **3.3: Labour Union Activity in South Africa's Textile Dispute**

In more detail, we will now look into the specific strategies used by the South African labour unions that may have led their government to take up the textile dispute with China. In COSATU's view, it was their engagement that led to a swing in the government's position from desiring to embark on a free trade agreement with Beijing to its decision to opt for a preferential trade agreement that excluded key products. This was stated in the secretariat report to the Ninth National Congress of COSATU (2006), which also mentioned that the preferential trade agreement's draft was even further amended after COSATU (or SACTWU, as will become clear

later) raised objections that led to the agreement on the clothing quota. In this section, this claim will be evaluated through an assessment of the impact of COSATU's strategies.

### **3.4: Embedding the Textile Issue**

First of all, we will look into how COSATU advocated the issue. The way in which this was done is of interest because documents of COSATU, such as press statements, speeches, as well as conference statements and resolutions, show rather few instances wherein the textile industry is mentioned on its own. Rather, the textile industry's hardships are often embedded into other, wider issues that COSATU brings up. For example, Joseph Nkosi (2006), then deputy-president of COSATU, explained at the SACTWU (Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union) Conference that real shared economic growth would require four things, among which he mentioned support for labour-intensive activities, like the clothing industry. Another example can be found in a 2006 press statement by COSATU, as found on their website. In this statement the problem of the trade discrepancy with China is addressed, particularly the contrast between the export of raw materials against the import of manufactured goods, of which the article mentions that it not only concerns textile.

Perhaps the direst issue that the textile dispute was embedded into was the poverty issue. COSATU's Western Cape Province branch made a press statement in which it directly linked the job losses in the textile sector to the poverty issue, which it then linked to issues such as crime and drug abuse in poverty-stricken communities (COSATU, 2005). COSATU's resolutions of its 8<sup>th</sup> National Congress (2003) embedded the troubles of the textile industry in the problems caused by the strong Rand. Amongst other examples of sectors that were disadvantaged by the strong Rand, the resolutions stated that thousands of textile, clothing and leather workers had experienced retrenchment, because of the sheer amount of imports into the country, and the loss

of export orders. It should be noted that in the news the Rand was also brought up as the reason for the cost-cutting behaviour of companies, which includes lay-offs and resistance against local-sourcing commitments (Louw, 2005).

The last example that will be presented here is former COSATU general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi's speech during the jobs and poverty demonstration (2005). Vavi mentioned clothing and construction workers as two examples of the groups that would lose out if the ANC passed a number of proposals that would allegedly limit worker right to organization and protection. The protest itself is of interested too, since the textile issue was also embedded in this demonstration, as will be discussed below.

Thus, the statements display a tendency in COSATU's messaging to rarely mention the textile industry by itself. Instead, in the early 2000s the textile issue is often explicitly brought up as an exemplary case of the precedent or outcome of other major issues in South African society. It is by no means clear if this method was used as an intentional strategy by COSATU to perhaps facilitate alliance building by involving other issue groups or to simply increase the relevance of the textile dispute. Nevertheless, it might be possible to evaluate if this habit helped to bring about the government's reaction in favour of the textile industry, once we get to assess the ANC's reaction to COSATU's actions in the next chapter.

### **3.5: The Jobs and Poverty Campaign and Media Responses**

As mentioned earlier, COSATU embarked on a demonstration, which focused on the topics of poverty and jobs. This demonstration in June 2005 was combined with a national one-day strike. It was the first action that was part of a wider campaign that would last until February the year after. The strikes and demonstrations that made up this campaign were to be held every week in a different province (Mde and Brown, 28 September 2005). For example, the schedule in October

2005 was as follows: on the third strikes were held in Eastern and Western Cape province; on the tenth in Gauteng and North West; on the seventeenth in Northern Cape, Free State, and Mpumalanga; and on the twenty-fourth in KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo (Robinson, 30 September 2005). Newspapers have reported on the campaign with mixed reactions. These reactions are worthwhile looking into as they may indicate the impact of the campaign with regard to getting the government to change its stance on the issues brought up, among which is textiles. The Mail & Guardian (26 May 2005), a South African newspaper, gave some background information on the strike. It explains that in the runup to the June 2005 strike, COSATU called for an end to the overvaluation of the Rand. Moreover, COSATU also said it would like unions to have access to the WTO safeguard that industries have. It claimed that these were necessary to save the clothing industry, which was suffering from cheap imports from China and elsewhere. COSATU also claimed that retailers should ensure that at least 75% of their stock is domestically produced. Likewise, mining companies should invest more at home. COSATU said in May it was willing to negotiate until June 27.

After the strike had taken place, the most negative reaction came from the Sunday Times (3 July 2005). Its article on the matter mainly downplayed the impact of the June 2005 COSATU strike. It stated that the strike has gone wholly unnoticed and that the South African economy can no longer be deterred by union action. It also mentions that COSATU stated that more than a million people joined the strike. The article did not contest the numbers but considered the matter irrelevant as it had not helped the strike to be noticed.

An article that appeared in Business Day in September written by Mde and Brown (28 September 2005), was somewhat more positive as it focused more on the COSATU perspective. It stated that the strike came when manufacturing sectors (among which textile) which served as traditional power bases of COSATU were facing heavy losses. Furthermore, it listed COSATU's

praise for the trade and industry department concerning attempts to bring about the bilateral negotiation with China to reduce textile imports. On the other hand, the article did state that recent figures of South Africa's economy indicted a growth in jobs, although it added that this was contested by COSATU. Interestingly, a later Business Day article by Radebe (10 October 2005) was rather dismissive of the strike campaign as it took up the viewpoint of the South African business community. The business community asserted that the campaign was detrimental to the economy as it deterred investors given that the strikes created the image of an unstable labour force.

Prince (3 October 2005), writing for the Cape Argus, also wrote on the COSATU perspective, but did not add competing views. The article mentioned that the union leadership expected a 70% stayaway on the October third strike. It also stated that a memorandum would be handed to business retailers and the Ministry of Trade and Industry in order to appeal against cheap Chinese imports. Furthermore, it reiterated the assessment by COSATU's central committee that the June 27 strike had created positive outcomes. Contrary to the tone in the article by Prince, the Cape Argus also released an article at an earlier point in time by Maposa (27 June 2005), which was reported on the views of economists which deemed the strike a negative influence rather than a positive one.

Business in Africa (30 June 2005), too added a view point to the discussion. Beyond COSATU's view concerning the massive losses in the textile industry, the paper also addressed the Chinese criticism against COSATU's demands. The Chinese side claimed that an import restriction would be against WTO rules and pointless as the gap would be filled by other major textile exporting countries. Instead, the Chinese side argued in favour of its own approach, which rests on subsidies, export rebates and low utility tariffs.

Moshoeshoe Monare and his colleagues (28 June 2005) wrote an article for IOL News that engaged the question of the turnout more elaborately. They questioned whether the strike was truly the success COSATU claimed it be. The authors mentioned that over 40000 people had joined the main demonstration near the ANC headquarters in Johannesburg. However, the estimates of the nation-wide number of strikers vary considerably: COSATU claimed that over two million workers bailed on work that day, while the South African Chamber of Business stated that only ten percent of the workers stayed from work. This would amount to about 700000 workers. Likewise, COSATU claimed that about 30000 people protested in Durban, even though the police estimated the group to be consisting of only 5000 people. COSATU responded by saying the Chamber of Business sought to downplay the influence of the strike. The union for textile workers (SACTWU) added that 86 percent of their labourers had joined the demonstration.

Other sectors that were affected included car manufacturing, mining, and retail. The impact on government policy was said to be unclear. Especially since the government denied willingness to act on various demands (which were allegedly promised by the government during the alliance meeting). For example, the government refused to devalue the Rand, which harmed the export-oriented manufacturers. Moreover, the government claimed that the current economy was in fact creating jobs. Nevertheless, the ANC did admit that some sectors, like textile, were under pressure. The government promised that it would find a short-term outcome for the clothing sector, but that a solution on the longer term was needed as well.

Further reporting by a staff reporter of the Mail & Guardian (27 June 2005), referencing Reuters, granted more insights into the matter of the turnout of retail, car manufacturing, and mining. The reporter stated that Reuters claimed that AngloGold Ashanti was missing the majority of its workers that day. Moreover, the South African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union (SACTWU), said about 86% of the clothing workers had supported the strike. The

Guardian (27 June 2005), a British newspaper, elaborating on this point, stating that between 27000 and 30000 of AngloGold Ashanti's 35000 workers were absent. Gold Fields, another mining company said 35% of its 40000 workers did not show up. Car manufacturing operated with more than 50% of its workers.

Another news article, written by Ben Maclellan (3 October 2005) for the Mail & Guardian, goes into the second strike of the jobs and poverty campaign. This second strike was wholly dedicated to the textile issue. COSATU claimed that it had shut down the textile industry that day, however the article disputes this as the police estimated the demonstration crowd to consist of around 5000 people, while COSATU put the number at 25000. During the protest, the Western Cape provincial secretary of COSATU asserted that the media would say only 200 people were present, while he himself asserted in that speech that more than 30000 people were present. The Cape Clothing Association also challenged the COSATU numbers. The Association had access to the absentee numbers of 49 of the 126-member firms of the organization, these 49 firms employed over 12000 people. The Association claimed that a large number of these firms had absentee ratings of less than 10%, although a few stuck around 70 to 80%. The overall rating was 46% of those 49 companies. During the march, COSATU also presented a memorandum concerning job loss in the sector, the strong Rand, cheap imports from China and other places, and buying locally. The Deputy Minister, Rob Davies, who received the memorandum said he would pass it on and try to ensure that it was taken seriously.

The last article of the Mail & Guardian by Gillian Jones (26 June 2005) explains that the strike actions may actually work against COSATU rather than for it. This is since many of the workers that it defends with this strike are unskilled labourers, who would benefit more from re-education than a strike as the general trend of the economy is to move away from mass employment of unskilled labour, according to those interviewed in the article. It also stated that



the previous attempt of COSATU to conduct such an action failed, as only 15% of the workers responded to the call for a strike (COSATU put the number at 60%). The article predicted that most support for the coming strike would come from textile, retail, and mining workers. It also mentioned that COSATU might seek to get public transportation involved in order to increase participation in other sectors, as a strike in public transportation would inhibit those willing to work from going to their job. A similar view point was expressed by analysts interviewed in another Mail & Guardian article, in which it was doubted that the strike would have any positive effect on business because of the complexity of the underlying problems. COSATU's response in the same article was that the strikes were more about exposing the problems and advocacy than directly solving the issue (Robinson, 30 September 2005).

In sum, it is clear that the media in South Africa is divided on the attempt by COSATU to influence the government. Whereas some news agencies seem to display more sympathy towards the textile industry and COSATU's campaign, other are more critical, still others report in both directions. This finding falls in line with Wasserman's (2012) conclusion on South African media responses to China's engagement with the country in general. His work showed that in the 2010-2011 period the outlets that ran the most stories on the topic published a more or less equal amount of negative and positive articles. Considering these findings, it can be said that the media was most likely not the decisive factor in civil society that may have helped to sway the South African government. This is especially the case since some of the reporting shows the doubt in COSATU's ability to muster sufficient support of labourers to influence government and industry. Concerning the actual effectiveness of the campaign, the verbal push back of the government against demands such as devaluation of the Rand and restructuring of the current economy, seems to confirm the doubts expressed in some of the newspapers. Regardless, the government seemed more receptive to the problems of the textile industry, as they did promise to look for a short-term

solution to help the textile industry and voiced the need for medium and long-term solutions as well. Before it is possible to reach a conclusion as to whether it was because of these strike actions and protests that the government took up the textile issue, COSATU's affiliation with the ANC need to be looked into in the next chapter. Before that, however, we will look into role of other actors to be certain that there were no other, confounding factors at play beyond the ones just mentioned.

### **3.6: Other Actors**

The most obvious other actor that sought to address the textile dispute is the representative organization of the industry, Clotrade. Indeed, Clotrade made the initial request regarding safeguards for the industry to the International Trade and Economic Development Division (ITEDD) in a negotiation that started in 2002. However, nothing was achieved, so in June 2005 Clotrade turned towards the International Trade Administration Commission (ITAC), which is in charge of safeguard investigations. Clotrade's request was rejected by ITAC, because it was outside the bounds set by the WTO.

SACTWU (the Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers Union), followed with a larger safeguard request in the next month, which sought to limit the textile influx from China. Surprisingly, the quota was that was eventually formulated in 2006 in response to the SACTWU request, went beyond the bounds of the WTO as well. This is noteworthy as Clotrade request was rejected on these same grounds. Another interesting point is that some product categories applied for by SACTWU were not given quotas, while others that were beyond Clotrade's initial request were given quotas. Moreover, the quotas did not seem to be based on the increase in imports, as some products were limited even though they had not experienced significant import quantities,

while some products that did see a large increase in imports were not subject to the quota (Brink, 2006).

This sequence of events indicates that the SACTWU demands were given more priority than those of Clotrade. Furthermore, although not all of its demands were met, the government seemed to be incentivized to at least placate the trade union, which adds up to what has been mentioned earlier. As such, only SACTWU can be seen as the other actor that influenced the process. It did so not only through its application for quotas, but also through adding its share to embedding the textile issue by building the Save Jobs Coalition with the SACC (South African Council of Churches), COSATU, and TAC (Treatment Action Campaign). It also added other community organizations and faith leaders that were concerned about international trade regulations and its local impact on job creation and poverty eradication, as SACTWU mentioned in a press statement (2005).

### **3.7: Labour Union Activity in Nigeria's Textile Dispute**

In follow up, Nigeria's trade union actions will be given due attention as well. From the previous sections we have learned that no response from the Nigerian government occurred in the same time frame as its South African counterpart. That is not to say that the Nigerian trade unions did nothing in this period, but rather, as we shall see, they had too much to do. This was since the Obasanjo government pushed labour unions to their limit. As will be argued below, this may have crowded out the campaign for the textile union's revival which ran from the year 2000 onwards. In the last few years however, signs of a turnaround have begun to show. The current Buhari government campaigns on its promise to revive the textile industry, has called upon the Chinese government for a reform of Nigerian-Chinese trade relations, has created a Textile Revival fund, and urged Nigerian government employees to wear clothing made in Nigeria. Whether this shift

is the result of the continued effort of the unions is questionable however (Bello, 2017; Aremu, 2016; Okafor, 2007).

### **3.8: Beleaguered Unions**

From the 1980 onwards, the National Union of Textile, Garment and Tailoring Workers of Nigeria (NUTGTWN) saw its membership base steadily decline as a result of the shrinking textile industry. While it was suffering these losses, it had to maintain its bargaining position vis-à-vis employers, including those that went out of business and failed to pay-out. In order to achieve these goals NUTGTWN was involved in a number of law suits against the latter group (Bello, 2017). It also engaged in extensive mass education to keep the union strong despite the decrease in memberships. At the same time, NUTGTWN as part of the NLC, was also involved in campaigns against the neo-liberal policies of the Obasanjo government. These campaigns aimed to counter the fuel price hikes and public-sector retrenchment initiated by the government. The actions taken during these campaigns demanded a major effort on the part of civil society led by the labour unions; an effort which constituted general strikes, popular action, press campaigns, and international appeals. More specifically, Okafor (2007) mentions that the civil-society opposition at first tried to engage in a dialogue with the government to persuade it. After, it resorted to lobbying of the legislature and press campaigns, as well as focused international appeals and public warnings against the government. In the end, however, rallies and general strikes were needed in most cases. The general strikes took place on numerous occasions until 2004, after which the NLC shifted to using mass rallies.

On the long term the actions by the labour unions did not have the desired effect, as they merely managed to gain concessions that temporarily stalled the policies of the Obasanjo government. In addition, it caused the government to strike back at the labour unions through

legislation that forbade the unions to strike unless the issue at hand involved an infringement of a collective agreement. Likewise, a supreme court ruling in 2004, preceding the 2005 law, denied the NLC the right to call general strikes as only its constituent unions were allowed to do that. The unions and civil society at large had to go through lengths to reduce the severity of the legislation, which was still worse before their intervention (Okafor, 2007).

This history, which occurred in the same period that the South African unions managed to gain a response from their government concerning the textile dispute, shows the state of the Nigerian unions at the time. Although the unions managed to organize strikes that had a profound impact for the length of their duration, they could not sway the government from its course. The fact that the unions had to invest so much of their capabilities into maintaining their position towards employers under economic decline and, at the same time, had to wage a losing battle against a labour-intolerant government, created a bleak prospect for the success for the textile labour union to overcome the textile dispute. As such, it could be said that, considering that the unions were mainly preoccupied with maintaining their foothold, the revival of the textile industry campaign was probably crowded out. This is not to say that it disappeared entirely, however. In the literature mentioned earlier it was shown that grievances from the textile dispute and the resistance against them were present, and still are, as more recent statements by tailors prove (Otas, 1 September 2017).

### **3.9: The Media's Role**

In 2018 the Nigerian news still reports on the problem of Chinese contraband textiles. An article by the Vanguard covered the grievances by Nigerian cotton farmers whose representatives addressed the issue during the 16<sup>th</sup> African Cotton Association Congress. The article reported the representatives as saying that China caused the collapse of the textile industry and that the

country produced counterfeit textiles which were labelled as if made in Nigeria. They stated that the Chinese counterfeits that are smuggled in via Benin are valued at 2 billion US dollar per year, which accounts for a fifth of the yearly recorded textile import. It also claimed that China's manufacturing sector had pushed smaller-scale competitors from across the globe out of business (Ewepu, 19 March 2018). A news article by the Daily Trust in 2017, went further still and called the entire trade relation with China unsustainable as the trade deficit continued grow. The article refers to the President of the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), who asserted that this is because Nigeria mainly exports raw materials, while China exports manufactured goods, like textiles, equipment, machinery, among others. As such, the president of MAN called for general limitation of foreign goods and other supporting policies for the local industries (Iloani, 12 June 2017). Yakubu Mohammed's (22 September 2016) interview with the emir of Kano echoes similar view points. The emir mentioned the example of fake textiles that overflowed northern Nigerian markets, thus drowning out the odds for industrialisation. Furthermore, he equalled the resources for manufactured goods trade to colonialism.

The textile dispute indeed poses a loss for the Nigerian economy, according to an article by Abiodun (7 March 2016) for This Day. It stated that analysts estimated that Nigerians would spend about \$140 million on foreign textiles in the fourth quarter. Moreover, it also pointed to data from the National Bureau of Statistics which asserted that approximately \$130 million was spend on imported textile in the third quarter of 2015. Lastly, it stated that smuggled textiles made for 85 percent of locally sold textiles and caused the under performance of the domestic textile industry.

Regardless, as will be elaborated upon below, the new government started to engage in textile-friendly policies in recent years. As a consequence, more articles on positive Chinese engagement started to appear as well. For example, both the Daily Trust and the Premium Times

covered the establishment of a textile park in Kwara state by a Chinese company. This project is said to create at least 3000 jobs (Premium Times, 12 June 2016; Ahmad, 16 September 2016). Moreover, the Guardian reported on another, similar project that involved the creation of a textile hub by the Chinese company Shandong Ruyi (Adewale, 27 September 2017). Vanguard also posted a similar article which claimed that more than 45 percent of Chinese firms have set themselves up in Nigeria, among which are textile firms (Anyagafu, 11 January 2016). This Day noted another positive development in the textiles issue. The newspaper published an article which underlined that Nigeria lost \$325 million annually to evasion of custom duty and value added tax over textiles brought into the country. The article specifically mentioned the example Chinese counterfeit wax prints which are being passed for Nigerian. The positive development regarding this issue was that under the new Comptroller-General unprecedented amounts of contraband have been seized compared to the previous decade (Aminu, 11 December 2017). It should be noted however, that this increased policing over customs evasion came after the textile ban was once again revoked in 2015 on grounds that it was indeed ineffective, and that Nigeria was to comply with the Common External Tariff that it had signed (Aja, 30 January 2017). This move was heavily criticised by pro-textile groups as reported in by media (Daily Trust, 27 June 2015).

As the articles on the textile dispute are traced back further in time, before the government's policy turned more favourable, they tend to express increasingly less positive views on the issue. As little back as 2014, Daily Trust ran an article on the local textile traders' complaints concerning competition from Chinese producers that opened sales points in Nigeria. The article explained that as China had almost pushed the textile producing sector out of existence, it was now becoming a serious challenger to the sales sector of textile as more than 70 Chinese companies were estimated to have established themselves in this regard (Mudashir and



Yaya, 9 November 2014). Further back, in the early 2000s, Weekly Trust, Daily Trust, This Day, The News, and Daily Champion all ran articles that emphasized the textile industry's problems related to cheap Chinese imports, the smuggling of these imports, their low quality, and the lack of proper policy coordination to make the solutions proposed by the government work (Awowole and Ekechukwu, 24 January 2005; Daramola, 27 September 2004; Imisim, 14 April 2004; This Day, 26 November 2002; Abdullahi, 11 October 2002; Kazaure, 13 November 2002; Suleiman, 1 November 2003). In sum, compared to the South African media, the Nigerian press tends to cover in favour of the textile industry's plight, only to become more positive once notable improvement became apparent. In this sense the media in Nigeria may have certainly played an advocacy role to the benefit of the textile industry in the dispute. However, it is unlikely it has contributed to the betterment of the textile industry as Obasanjo remained indifferent towards the topic as the lack proper policy consideration showed. Moreover, for reasons that will be elaborated upon in the next chapter, the following governments may have had their own motivations to make a firmer attempt at saving the industry.

## **Chapter 4: The State**

### **4.1: The COSATU-ANC Alliance Relation**

The next question that these divergent histories raise is why the states responded differently to the campaigns. Both campaigns had considerable support behind them, yet this did not seem to make a difference in Nigerian case, while in South African case results were achieved. Moreover, it can be said the media factor did not play a decisive role either, since in Nigeria the media was clearly reporting more in favour of the textile industry than in South Africa, yet it was in South Africa that the government took action within a relatively short timeframe, not Nigeria. The answer then, should not sought be in civil society alone, but also in the nature of the two states and their relationship with the labour unions.

South Africa's government is of most immediate interest here as the theories mentioned before and the recent disagreements that the ANC shares with COSATU would make one expect a more unyielding stance on the part of the government. After all, COSATU and the ANC had clashed with each other on numerous occasions over the latter's insistence to follow an increasingly neo-liberal policy (Pillay, 2006). Moreover, as mentioned, centralized states in particular have notable incentives to withhold power from competitors such as labour unions. South Africa can be considered such a state as it is both a unitary state and has a political landscape defined by a historically dominant-party.

Now this last point requires some nuance considering that scholars have pointed out that South Africa displays many features that could be attributed to a federal system. Moreover, even in provinces that have an ANC majority, the provincial governments have shown willingness to resist the central government's directives. Regardless, the actual strength of the provinces can be called into question as the government has many concurrent powers and can intervene in provincial autonomy if national standards are not properly maintained or if the economic unity of

South Africa is put under pressure, among other contingencies. Beyond these, provincial power is also limited by the weak governing capacity of some provinces as well as budget austerity. Some intergovernmental organizations reflect the limits too, such as the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) which, because of lacking administrative capacity on the part of the provinces, has been accused of being a rubber stamp institution for the national government (Tapscott, 2000).

Combine these weaknesses of the federal features of South Africa with the previous unilateral tendencies that the national government has displayed against civil society challengers like COSATU itself, and it would seem that at best South Africa is but a weak federal system with centralizing tendencies at certain times. For our purposes which involve international negotiations – an aspect traditionally dominated by national governments – it can therefore be safely said that South Africa functions as a centralized state in this context.

Despite this situation, ANC did not follow the expected course of action: although the ANC did not agree with all of COSATU's positions, the ANC did not seem hostile to the campaign as such. In fact, in a press statement by the ANC (2005) on the matter, the party expressed consent towards the issue and the campaign. It said that the ANC recognized the problem and that the workers were exercising their right to pursue their interests. The statement pledged a number of solutions such as investment in the public and private sectors, reducing business costs, and providing training for workers. It also said that the Alliance would continue to work on immediate solutions for specific industries (among which was textile) but did not specify what.

Indeed, textile appeared to be a problem over which the ANC and COSATU had negotiated a consensus through the Alliance. For example, COSATU press statements asserted that the clothing sector was considered a priority industry in Alliance agreements (Nkosi, 2005). Additionally, the ANC's website also hosted a press statement of the alliance published in June

2005, which elaborated on a joint discussion paper written by the ANC and COSATU in which a number of solutions were proposed to the textile industry issue. These included: proposals to improve quality of locally manufactured goods, to promote product and design innovation, to upgrade technology, to reduce raw material costs, to use local supplies more effectively, to improve efficiency and supply chain management through the use of advances in information and communication technologies (ICT), and better infrastructure and improved levels of investment. Safeguard measures on imports as allowed under the rules of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and combating illegal imports, were also brought up. (Motlanthe and Vavi, 2005).

Thus, it would appear from the timing of the alliance publications that COSATU and its subsidiaries managed to put the textile issue on the ANC's agenda through their continued advocacy and mass actions. Yet the disparity with the Nigerian case indicates that there must be more to COSATU's influence than advocacy and mass action alone. Indeed, the most conventional explanation would point towards the alliance that the ANC and COSATU share. This is since the alliance could function as a counter incentive against the centralized state's motivations to limit the power of organized labour. After all, the alliance works in two directions: on the one hand COSATU has direct access to the ANC, but on the other hand the ANC can also directly influence COSATU. Moreover, COSATU workers tend to overwhelmingly vote for the ANC during elections, which, arguably, makes them a key constituency for the ANC.

Cherry and Southall's (2006) work on COSATU worker's attitude towards politics certainly points somewhat towards the former explanation. They state that COSATU's leadership and its members closed ranks with the ANC during the 2004 election, despite the recent neoliberal tendencies of the ANC. Noteworthy is that the explanation for this behaviour is that, regardless of its undesirable policies, the ANC is seen by the workers as the only party that upholds workers' interests. Additionally, COSATU's leadership found in the ANC election

program that it is committed to reducing unemployment and poverty. As such, the labour congress decided to support the ANC once again, with 74% of its members intending to vote for the ANC. In contrast, COSATU's member's support for the tripartite alliance has steadily decreased over the years, from 82 percent in 1994 to 66 percent in the last survey by the authors. They furthermore suggest that this may be a result of the increasingly marginalized position of COSATU in the alliance, which leads more and more workers to assert that COSATU should become independent of political interests. Interestingly, when given a set of non-exclusive options concerning what to do if the government fails to deliver, most workers said that they will pressure unionists in parliament. Besides this option, 73% said they would participate in mass action, 42% said they would vote for another party, and 38% said that another party for the workers should be formed.

These findings by Cherry and Southall might very well indicate that the ANC's decision to comply with the demands regarding the textile industry was a token move to ensure that COSATU would not be alienated further. After all, non-compliance might cause the approval rating for the alliance and perhaps even for the ANC, to drop. Of course, this would be highly undesirable as it would move either COSATU or large parts of its membership base away from direct ANC influence. Especially, the combination of lowering approval for the alliance and the tendency of workers to push their parliamentary representatives for favourable policy, may form a problem for the ANC as it presents a clear incentive for COSATU's members in parliament to stop cooperating with the ANC. The reason why the textile issue of all topics has received the attention of the ANC might be the result of COSATU's campaign. The embedding of the textile dispute into the other problems may have given it an exemplary, and therefore symbolic, role. Thus, in order for the ANC to display its continued commitment to COSATU's interests and its own promises, it may have taken up the textile dispute to fulfil these objectives.

## 4.2: The Nigerian State-Civil Society Rivalry

On the Nigerian side, the Nigerian government seems to become more and more textile friendly, about a decade after the South African government responded to the issue. The Buhari government has made the goal of saving and rejuvenating the textile industry one of its main selling points during its most recent re-election campaign. Moreover, as mentioned above, during his current term Buhari and his government have implemented a number of policies that are more favourable towards the textile industry. Beyond the 50 billion Naira Textile Revival Fund, the creation of the Cotton, Textile and Garment Policy Council and other such policy councils (some of which NUTGTWN was made a member), and the initiative of endorsing Nigerian textile for government employees, Buhari also sought to actively address the import problem (Bello, 2017; The News, 12 April 2016). During a visit to Beijing, Buhari openly called upon the Nigerian and Chinese business communities to reduce the trade imbalance between the two countries. At the Nigeria-China Business/Investment Forum, where the appeal was made, Buhari also urged the Chinese to deem Nigeria as an investment destination where goods can be both manufactured and consumed locally.

Moreover, concerning the smuggling problem, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development threatened to close the border if smuggling from neighbouring countries continued (Nigerian Tribune, 1 June 2017). In addition, in the same year, Vice President Osinbajo said that local manufacturing would not survive if smuggling continued, therefore he wished to engage in cooperation with Nigeria's neighbours to ensure border policing (The News, 5 October 2017). Government agencies also pitched in. For example, The Standard Organization of Nigeria, which evaluates whether imported products are up to official requirements, decided to engage the Chinese Standards Organization when the import problem went beyond its capabilities. The

meeting however, did not yield any outcome as the Chinese side proved unwilling to give any concessions and, according to the Nigerian representatives, pretended that the level of English was beyond their ability in order to cease the dialogue (Nwokoji, Okoli and Okoruwa, 25 March 2017).

Noteworthy is that Nigeria is a full fledged federal state, but, like South Africa, faced a number of problems throughout its history that bend its functioning in practice to something that resembles a centralized state. One of these problems is the internal competition among ethnic groups, which has led to the member states being drained of both resources and power. The ethnic struggle also gave way to attempts to centralize power in order for groups to obtain the central resource allocation (Rashid, 2003). Indeed, the lack of transparency in the budget allocation between central and local governments leads grassroot individuals to focus on the central government, rather than the local ones (Wunsch, 2001).

Furthermore, the education gap between Northern and Southern Nigeria meant that the North was not as well represented in the federal bureaucracy. The military, on the other hand, saw an overrepresentation of Northern officers (Rashid, 2003). Said military also pushed Nigeria away from functional federalism as the military dictatorships reshaped the system fitting to a centralized military hierarchy (Ojo, 2009). On top of this, even though in the early 1990s the central government gave the states more jurisdiction in terms of education, health, and other fields, the national government also cut the state's budget and personnel. In this case the government created a vacuum, rather than a federal system. As such, the local governments continued to depend on the national government for technical assistance. Later, the problem continued as the central government took back control over education and cash flow to the local governments continued to be erratic (Wunsch, 2001). This all has led some scholars to claim that



Nigeria is federal in name only, and the ramifications of its system are more unitary despite the country being a pioneer of federalism in Africa (Ojo, 2009; Rashid, 2003).

As such, it is highly doubtful whether the recent shift is the result of continued effort by the labour unions, considering the implication of a centralized state. However, the Deputy General-Secretary of NUTGTWN was more confident in the union's role in the matter as he said that it was probably the result of advocacy by the union and other actors that wished to see Nigeria's industry restored. External events, however, seem to suggest that the other actors had the decisive input, rather than the unions. For one, although NUTGTWN's membership has been growing again from 2008 onwards thanks to the influx of self-employed tailors into the union, it has but little more than half of the membership base it had in 2000 at the start of the campaign. Additionally, the membership that is actually employed in the industry, rather than self-employed, is less than a third of its size in the Obasanjo years (Bello, 2017). Thus, its leverage in terms of sheer numbers is less than in the period when it was unable to bring about change. Furthermore, the wider labour union community showed in 2016 that it was still unable to change the course of the government when the Buhari administration also sought to raise fuel prices. NUTGTWN General Secretary Aremu claimed that the failure on the part of the labour movement was a consequence of it lacking a united front (Oyelola, 2016).

Beyond competitive measures to influence policy, the relation between Nigeria's labour unions and the state also lacks a cooperative element through which to sway the state, like the one observed in the South African case. In contrast to South Africa, where the end of apartheid saw a continuation of the cooperation among the main resistance groups, in Nigeria the unity between what was to become the ruling class and civil society groups was lost soon after independence was achieved. Not long after, the elite that came into power sought to exclude mass and popular movements from government, while also using the state to maintain their own power.

As a result, some civil society groups were incorporated by the state, while those that were not with the state were marginalized in favour of those that were. This division in civil society itself extended to later years, as civil society became home to both anti-state and pro-state groups (Usman, 2009). Furthermore, Usman (2009) explains that this process is the result of the way in which Nigeria achieved independence: rather than a struggle, the independence movement ended in a negotiation with the British, which left most of the colonial policies (such as those regulating labour) in place and even strengthened them. Thus, Nigeria was given fertile soil for a labour versus state dichotomy to grow. Moreover, although the military regimes went furthest in their attempts to control civil society, the democratic period was not free of such endeavours either, as the chapter on civil society pointed out. All this leads Usman (2009) to even suggest that the very autonomy of Nigerian civil society in general can be questioned.

In sum, neither civil society by itself, nor its relationship with the state seems sufficient to explain the shift in government policy in this case. This is since the adversarial relation between the two allows civil society to only sway the government through competitive means, which means that the state will hold its incentive to follow its own course if it can resist, which seems to have been the case in this context. Then, another explanation for the government's shift should be provided. This explanation can be found in the fact that the Buhari government seeks to revive the industry through an import substitution strategy. This choice of strategy is indicative that Buhari may have come to the shift in policy by himself. This is since during his military rule in the 1980s his economic policy also rested heavily on a preference for a type of import substitution that relied on the use of local materials (Nwachuku and Godfrey, 2004). This coincidence shows that there is a possibility that the President has a personal inclination to pursue such kind policies in a bid to reform the economy, which would severely limit the saliency of labour union-based explanations.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

With the process behind the textile disputes in Nigeria and South Africa addressed, this paper arrives at its conclusion. For clarity's sake the contents of the previous chapter will be briefly recapped. In sum: African responses to China's influence on the continent are divided and dissimilar, despite that the need for a united approach has been made known. This dividedness has been attributed to the diverging interests of African nations. Nevertheless, even when facing similar incentives, like under the textile dispute, the countries react in different ways. In order to answer this riddle, this paper looked into the factors of state and civil society applied to the cases of Nigeria and South Africa to explain these discrepancies in the context of the textile industry.

The two countries share quite some similarities regarding these topics: both Nigeria and South Africa have an extensive relation with China which yields significant benefits as well as notable competition, and in both countries the textile industry suffered badly because of this competition. In terms of civil society, the two countries share a seeming suspicion towards civil society and seek to control it, albeit South Africa appears more tolerant than Nigeria, especially towards organized labour. The labour unions in Nigeria as well as South Africa conducted extensive campaigns to influence the government. However, whereas South Africa's organized labour was able to embed the textile dispute into the other topics of the campaigns, in Nigeria labour unions were on the defensive and left the textile issue as one of the other problems that they campaigned for. Therefore, in South Africa the embedded textile dispute became an exemplary problem and therefore gained saliency, while in Nigeria it was crowded out. As for the media: in Nigeria the media was more favourable towards the textile industry, while in South Africa it was divided in its reporting. This seems to suggest that the role of the media was insignificant as South Africa was the first to respond, not Nigeria.

The fact that both countries saw extensive mass action campaigns yet had dissimilar outcomes, indicates that there must have been more at play. The additional variable proposed in this research is the state perspective, which shows that both countries, despite having a notable federal background, function in practice as centralized states in the context of our topic. Regardless of this similarity, it was only in South Africa that the direct negotiations with COSATU and the ANC yielded the results. The relation between COSATU and the ANC can account for this result as it overcomes the centralized state's incentive to prevent falling under the influence of civil society. COSATU functioned as a power base for the ANC; it was a constituency that needed to be appeased. In Nigeria, civil society historically has been divided between pro-state groups which are favoured by the state and anti-state groups which are kept in check, if not outright repressed. Organized labour, even in the latest democratic era, falls under the latter category. As such, the Nigerian elites seek to remain autonomous of the labour unions' influence if they can, as was the case in the textile dispute. With this in mind, the most recent shift in policy could be explained by Buhari's personal faith in import substitution strategies, rather than the continued efforts of civil society as new attempts by organized labour to sway the government on other topics displayed the labour unions' inability to do so.

Then to come back to our research question: *How does the difference in the state and civil society between Nigeria and South Africa relate to the difference in responses to the textile dispute with China in Nigeria and South Africa?* With the information given above, it is possible to provide a concise answer. The answer is that South Africa's civil society in the form of its labour congress COSATU was able to grant broader saliency to the textile dispute by embedding it into the wider problems at play in South African society and was able to gain the compliance of the government through the positive incentives that sprang forth from the cooperative relation that the two shared. The difference in Nigeria was that the relation between state and civil society

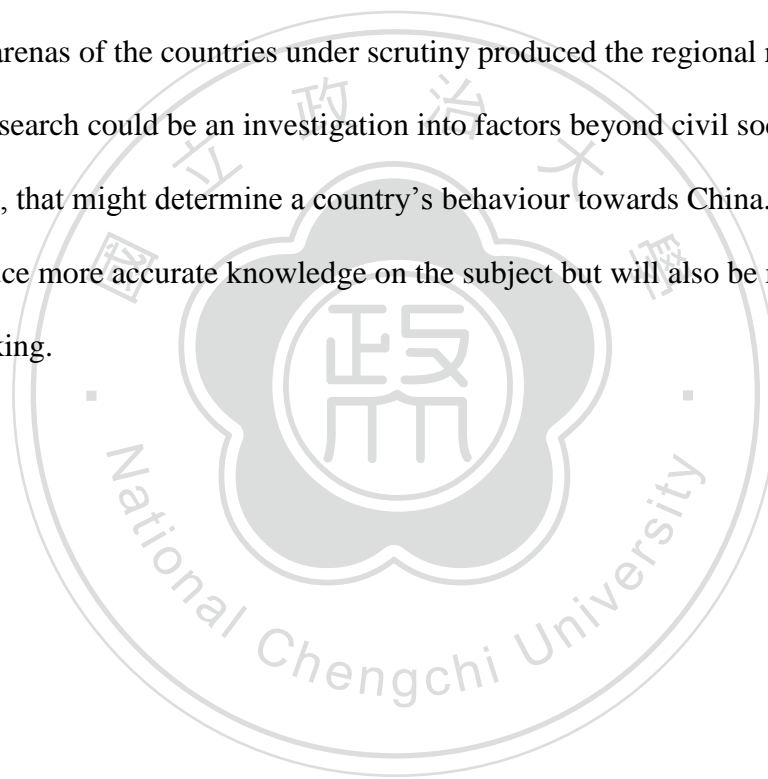
was purely competitive and as such organized labour was increasingly marginalized, therefore it was unable to sufficiently push the textile issue. Neither was it able to offer the government incentives from cooperation to offset the government's hostility, thus it was entirely dependent on the government's plans whether the textile dispute was appropriately addressed. Hence it can be said that the difference in responses to the textile issue depended on whether organized labour was able to make the issue salient and gain the cooperative compliance of the state, otherwise the outcome relies on the views of the incumbent government.

For the wider question of what causes the discrepancy between African responses to the textile issue and China's general involvement in the continent, the findings presented in this paper underline the importance of domestic politics in determining the type of reaction that a single African country has to China. Indeed, these findings seem to validate the focus on the domestic arena of the African countries as chosen in this research. This appears to justify further research on how the internal dynamics of countries shape their behaviour towards China, instead of putting the focus on the approach chosen by China to engage the country in question. In turn, this outcome taps into an underlying problem of the China in Africa debate: the sheer size of the continent and notable difference in domestic politics of the constituent countries of Africa, causes continent-wide assessments of the reception of China to lead to broad generalizations that do not account for differences between countries or even specific sectors within countries. This critique differs from the developmental explanation mentioned by Ikome (2010), in that it also underlines the importance of the arrangement of internal interest groups, rather than wider national interests alone.

Indeed, the peculiarity of taking Africa as a whole becomes markedly clear when extrapolated to other continents: it is not common practice to take North or South America as a whole when discussing China in America. The same goes for China in Europe, or in its own

neighbourhood, Asia, for that matter. Additionally, given China's own tendency to take a bilateral approach in most of its diplomatic engagements it could be said to favour a country-by-country approach as standard method, rather than a continent-wide perspective (Chidaushe, 2007). This is not to say that continent wide approaches are without merit, instead the problem lies in that the popular conception of China-Africa relations is skewed too much towards such thinking.

The implications of this problem for future research mean that further studies into China in Africa ought to be more country specific or at least assess the continent's perspective based on how the domestic arenas of the countries under scrutiny produced the regional response. An example of such research could be an investigation into factors beyond civil society and its relation to the state, that might determine a country's behaviour towards China. Such endeavour will not only produce more accurate knowledge on the subject but will also be more useful in terms of policymaking.



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