

Between the Giant and the Dragon: An Investigation into the Myth of Neo-Colonialism in Sino-Nigerian Relations

Mustapha Sanusi Mahmoud

Submitted to the
Institute of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
International Relations

Eastern Mediterranean University
February 2024
Gazimağusa, North Cyprus

Approval of the Institute of Graduate Studies and Research

Prof. Dr. Ali Hakan Ulusoy
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations.

Prof. Dr. Ahmet Sözen
Chair, Department of Political Science
and International Relations

We certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Berna Numan
Supervisor

Examining Committee

1. Prof. Dr. Ahmet Sözen
2. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Berna Numan
3. Asst. Prof. Dr. Devrim Şahin

ABSTRACT

This thesis critically examines claims of neocolonialism in China's engagement with Nigeria, employing a multidimensional and mixed methods approach. Through historical analysis, quantitative scrutiny of Chinese loans, and qualitative assessment of leaders' speeches, the study seeks to unravel the complexities of Sino-Nigerian relations. Historical insights into the foreign policies of both nations set the stage, providing context for their evolving interactions. The quantitative aspect focuses on Chinese loans in critical sectors, such as mining and transport, aiming to discern the extent of neocolonial influence. Concurrently, qualitative content analysis of leaders' speeches adds depth to the investigation. Findings challenge prevalent neocolonial narratives, revealing a nuanced relationship between China and Nigeria. While significant Chinese investment is evident, the study suggests that claims of neocolonial leverage are overstated. Instead, the foundation of Sino-Nigerian relations appears rooted in South-South cooperation, with China fostering African development and Nigeria benefiting economically and politically. Drawing from historical debt experiences, the thesis recommends that Nigeria negotiate astutely and glean lessons from others' defaults. It underscores the need for prudence in foreign policy, particularly in navigating the delicate balance between the West and China. The research concludes by emphasizing the importance of informed decision-making in the face of evolving global dynamics, shaping a nuanced understanding of contemporary international relations.

Keywords: Economic dependency, Foreign Policy, Diplomacy, Neo-colonialism, Debt trap.

ÖZ

Bu tez, Çin'in Nijerya ile ilişkilerindeki neokoloniyalizm iddialarını çok boyutlu bir yaklaşımla incelemektedir. Tez, tarihsel analiz, Çin kredilerinin nicel değerlendirmesi ve liderlerin konuşmalarının nitel analizi aracılığıyla, Sino-Nijerya ilişkilerinin karmaşıklıklarını çözmeyi amaçlıyor. İlk aşamada tez, her iki ülkenin dış politikalarının tarihsel analizini, etkileşimlerinin hangi bağlamda olduğunu inceleyerek yapmaktadır. Böylece nicel analiz ile, Çin kredilerinin madencilik ve ulaşım gibi kritik sektörlerdeki etkisini belirlemeyi hedeflemektedir. Aynı anda liderlerin konuşmalarının nitel içerik analizi, araştırmaya derinlik katmaktadır.

Tarihsel borç deneyimlerinden yararlanma bağlamında, tez, Nijerya'nın akılcı bir şekilde müzakere yapmasını ve diğerlerinin iflaslarından ders çıkarmasını önermektedir. Özellikle Batı ve Çin arasındaki hassas dengeyi yönetme noktasında dış politikada ölçülü davranma gerekliliğini vurguluyor. Araştırma, çağdaş uluslararası ilişkilerin karmaşık dinamikleri karşısında bilinçli karar alma önemini vurgulayarak sona ermektedir.

Bulgular, yaygın neokolonyal anlatıları sorguluyor ve Çin ile Nijerya arasındaki ilişkinin nüanslı olduğunu ortaya koyuyor. Önemli Çin yatırımları mevcut olmasına rağmen, çalışma, neokolonyal etki iddialarının abartıldığını öne sürüyor. Bunun yerine, Sino-Nijerya ilişkilerinin temelini Güney-Güney işbirliğinde olduğunu, Çin'in Afrika kalkınmasını teşvik ettiğini ve Nijerya'nın ekonomik ve siyasi olarak bundan faydalandığını gösteriyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ekonomik bağımlılık, Dış Politika, Diplomasi, Yeni Sömürgecilik, Borç Tuzağı.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all the unsung heroes who have tirelessly toiled for the benefit of both China and Nigeria and other countries striving to develop in spite of being under the shadow of foreign selfish influences. From the highest civil servant crafting policies to the average laborer contributing to the daily rhythm of life, let it be known your steadfast efforts do not go unnoticed. In the intricate tapestry of Sino-Nigerian relations, this dedication extends to the diplomats forging connections, the scholars unraveling historical intricacies, and the everyday citizens contributing to the fabric of cooperation. It is an acknowledgment of the collective dedication that transcends borders and titles, recognizing that the profound impact of individuals, often unseen but deeply felt, is woven into the narrative of this study. May this work stand as a tribute to the spirit of collaboration and understanding that fuels the progress of nations and the interconnected world we inhabit.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to start by expressing my gratitude to Allah (S.W.T), the Almighty, for blessing me with the opportunity to pursue my academic aspirations. Without His guidance and blessing, I would not have been able to complete this project. I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of all those who had a guiding hand in building me to become the man I am today. None of this would have been possible without the input of each and every one of you. From my earliest teachers in nursery to my professors in the university, all your efforts, patience and guidance are deeply appreciated forever.

To my parents who have stood by me with unwavering support and encouragement, there are not enough words in all the languages in the world to express my gratitude. A heartfelt thank you to my siblings also, whose prayers helped keep me strong in challenging times.

To the friends and colleagues that have helped me along this academic journey I also thank you and acknowledge your kindness.

A special thank you to my supervisor, Prof Dr. Berna Numan for her continuous support throughout the process of my research. Her expertise and wisdom have been instrumental in shaping my research ideas and sharpening my critical thinking skills.

Thank you all for your love and support.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The discourse of Chinese neo-colonialism in Africa is becoming highly prevalent in the media, within prominent academic circles and in the halls of many a government. China stands as one of the biggest lenders to many African countries like Nigeria, this claim of neo-colonialism calls to question the nature of the relationship between the two countries and this is the focus of this research. According to the Debt Management Office (DMO, 2023) of Nigeria, the total external debt was at \$41.59 billion and it was 36.38% of the country's total debt stock. Out of this \$41.59 billion, China through its Export-Import Bank is the largest bilateral lender with \$3.9 billion. However, the largest amount of debt being owed by Nigeria to a single foreign entity is three times China's amount, which is \$12.5 billion owed to the International Development Association (IDA), which is a member of The World Bank Group.

According to data obtained from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (OECD, 2008) financial assistance that has been extended to African countries like Nigeria has mostly been from countries that are colloquially referred to as "the West" (United States, Canada, countries from western Europe, the European Union, and Japan). Within the field of development studies, it has become clear based on numerous research backed evidence, that in a country like Nigeria, development aid has a negative relationship with human development. That is to say that even as more money is being pumped out by donor countries and organizations,

human development has not changed for the better, rather it has even become worse (Okon, 2012). Furthermore, the policies that were encouraged by the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) which were mainly domiciled and dominated by the West, did not have the advertised positives effects, but rather the opposite. These market oriented structural reform policies that became popularly termed Washington Consensus, turned out to have devastating effects on the economies of the countries that applied them (Okonjo-Iwela et al, 2021). This relates to this thesis because these reforms were used by the western backed institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and The World Bank Group as prerequisites for receiving development financing and from here we can begin to understand why China has become more appealing as an alternative source of development assistance to countries like Nigeria. According to Bodomo (2019), in his analysis of China-Africa-Europe relations, conditions and conditionalities were the main differences in how the European Union and China engaged with African countries like Nigeria. Meanwhile the conditions set by China in its engagement with Africa are seen in the five principles of non-interference which were outlined by the Chinese President Xi Jinping in his keynote speech at the 2018 Forum for China Africa Co-operation (FOCAC) Summit in Beijing, which I subsequently use as part of my qualitative analysis.

The study underscores the reciprocal nature of China-Africa ties, with a focus on economic, diplomatic, cultural aspects, highlights mutual benefits and a commitment to non-interference. Recognizing Nigeria's delicate balancing act between China and the West, especially in light of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the research navigates the transformative impact of China's global rise. The BRI is China's ambitious infrastructure and economic development project aimed at enhancing

connectivity and fostering economic cooperation between countries across Asia, Africa, Europe, and beyond through the construction of roads, railways, ports, and other infrastructure projects (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, EBRD, 2023). In conclusion, the findings offer crucial insights for policymakers globally, using Nigeria's experiences as a guide to manage their countries relationships with China amid the evolving global order towards a multipolar configuration.

The following sections aim to provide an introduction into the history of the two and post-independence trajectories and show the knowledge gap that exists in this field, illustrating how this research addresses it. The chapter delves into China's recognition of Africa's importance through the Forum on China Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), challenging perceptions after the Cold War. The failed United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) vote on Xinjiang is analyzed, in an attempt to test claims of neo-colonialism and emphasizing the need for conceptualization. This vote was initiated by the US for a UN discussion on rights abuses against the Uyghurs.

1.1 Background

Nigeria gained her independence from Great Britain in 1960 and since then has been free to carry out its affairs as a sovereign state and implement its foreign policy independently. China on the other hand although never having been fully colonized by a foreign power, it has had in the past, large swathes of its territory being under the control of other countries until finally in 1949 the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) came to power and unified all of China under its rule. For countries to become fully independent and able to carry out their domestic and foreign policy objectives effectively, they need to have develop themselves to the extent where they would not

find themselves beholden to a foreign power and hence their sovereignty and independence weakened.

The end of the cold war was perceived by some to mean that African countries like Nigeria would no longer hold an important position in global politics and even less so economically due to its largely underdeveloped status (Bodomo, 2019). This view is now proven to be completely mistaken as it underestimated or even ignored the importance of African countries as sources of great human and natural wealth. China, however, did not make this mistake. FOCAC was established in the year 2000, has brought these African countries closer to its sphere of influence.

This close relationship that China has worked to foster with African countries has come under scrutiny by some observers with the claim that China seeks to carry out a neo-colonial agenda in Africa for economic and political reasons. This makes it imperative for us to understand the real effects of Chinese investments in target countries and how that might affect the socio-economic development, political independence, and sovereignty of Nigeria and its foreign policy in the long run.

1.2 Problem Statement

Nigeria and China have had diplomatic relations since 1971 (Ojo, 2020). Since then, they have fostered that relationship through various means but the glaring disparity of the two countries economic and political power has led to questions being asked as to what exactly is the kind of relationship that exists between the two states.

Some scholars and members of the western liberal media have met this question with the answer that in its relationship with countries like Nigeria, China seeks to embark on an imperialist journey with neo-colonial ambitions (Bello, 2007; Masucol, 2018;

Obeng-Odoom, 2022). According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2023), China's economy was the second largest in the world behind only the US, with a gross domestic product (GDP) of \$17.70 trillion. This figure dwarfs that of Nigeria which stood at \$390 billion (IMF, 2023). This kind of disparity between the two countries forms the basis of the problem that this research addresses.

A recent episode in the Nigerian Federal House of Assembly caused a widespread public debate on the role Chinese investments are playing in the Nigerian economy and political space. The inclusion of a specific clause in the commercial loan agreement, signed on September 5, 2018, between the Federal Ministry of Finance and the Export-Import Bank of China for the Nigeria. National Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Infrastructure Backbone Phase II Project, drew widespread attention from Nigerian lawmakers during their examination of the agreement (Ekanem, Okocha, & Addeh, 2020). The clause stated that

“The Borrower [i.e., the state of Nigeria] hereby irrevocably waives any immunity on the grounds of sovereign or otherwise for itself and its property in connection with any arbitration proceeding pursuant to Article 8(5), thereof with the enforcement of any arbitral award pursuant thereto, except for the military assets and diplomatic assets.”

This brought a lot of attention to Chinese dealings with Nigeria as it was seen from a first glance at that Nigeria was ceding its sovereignty to China. However, a closer look at the document revealed that the language used was a standard procedure in loan agreements like that. The precise language used in legal documents, such as contracts, is of paramount importance, and skilled lawyers invest significant effort in crafting provisions that accurately reflect the mutual understanding and intent of the parties involved. Simplistic or journalistic interpretations of contract language can

significantly alter the meaning of a provision and potentially lead to incorrect interpretations of the legal consequences of a contract.

According to Deron (2022), the immunity mentioned in the clause is a legal privilege that sovereign states and international organizations enjoy. There are two types of immunity under international public law. The first is immunity from jurisdiction, which means that a country cannot be sued in the courts of another sovereign state or arbitral tribunals without its consent. The second is immunity from execution, which protects the assets of a state by being seized by law enforcement of another state. All sovereign states enjoy this immunity and have the right to waive it if they deem fit.

Due to the possibility of a dispute arising in the future as a result of default or a disagreement with the loan, the Chinese government required the waiver of jurisdiction immunity in order to grant the loan. The stance taken by the Nigerian state does not seem to be unreasonable and is consistent with typical practices in international contracts involving states. Hence, it would be incorrect to deduce from the contract terms alone that Nigeria has relinquished its sovereignty to China, just as a person does not lose their humanity by voluntarily choosing to work for free. Unlike a national court, an arbitration tribunal derives its jurisdiction solely from the parties' consent to submit to its authority. A party cannot be compelled to appear before an arbitrator against its will. In this case, Nigeria's consent to the dispute resolution clause can be attributed to the perceived economic benefits of obtaining the loan agreement with China. Issues like these concerning loan agreements between the two countries have led to an increasing consciousness in the psyche of the average Nigerian with regards to how China is engaging Nigeria and the consequences of that engagement. This

thesis attempts to shed light on that by investigating how Nigeria's foreign policy has been affected by its relationship with China.

China and Nigeria hold prominent positions as influential countries within their respective continents, boasting significant economic and political power. However, it is crucial to recognize that the nature and scope of their power and influence in the global arena differ substantially. China, as a recognized global superpower, wields substantial clout in international affairs, while Nigeria's influence is primarily concentrated within its regional sphere. Despite these disparities, the bilateral relationship between Nigeria and China has grown stronger due to Nigeria's increasing economic and political significance within Africa and China's expanding presence on the continent. Although Nigeria may not possess the same level of global power and influence as China, the strategic importance of their relationship remains undeniable for both nations and the wider region.

China's population of 1.41 billion and its substantial gross domestic product (GDP) of \$17.52 trillion (Prasad, 2023) provide the country with the capacity to engage with the international community and other nations at a level that Nigeria, with a population of approximately 200 million people and a GDP of \$440 billion (Alege, 2021; World Bank, 2022), cannot match. China's economic might and diplomatic prowess enable it to exert influence on a global scale, while Nigeria's influence is primarily centred on its regional interactions.

The strengthening relationship between China and Nigeria is a result of the recognition of their mutual benefits. China sees Nigeria as an essential partner in its ambitious BRI project and has made substantial investments in Nigeria's infrastructure development.

Additionally, Nigeria, as Africa's largest economy, offers attractive opportunities for Chinese investors and serves as a gateway to the wider African market. This suggests a kind of symbiotic relationship that underscores the strategic importance of their engagement and highlights the growing interdependence between the two countries.

The difference in economic and demographic power means that China is more capable of leveraging its resources to advance its interests and influence global affairs. However, despite Nigeria's relatively smaller economic output and population, the country still holds strategic importance in the region and on the continent, and has the potential to become a more influential player on the global stage.

A look at the historical backgrounds of China and Nigeria unveils their shared experiences of being victims of outside influence and exploitation. Nigeria endured British colonization until gaining independence in 1960, after which the country worked diligently to assert its global role and pursue foreign policies aligned with its national interests. On the other hand, while China never experienced complete colonization throughout its history, it did endure prolonged periods of foreign control over significant territories (Johnson, 2002). Similarly, numerous other states faced the plight of colonial subjugation by Western powers until the aftermath of World War II, when nationalist movements and the call for self-determination gained prominence under the newly formed United Nations (UN) in 1945. However, even after attaining independence, these newly liberated states remained entangled in the webs of colonial treaties, resulting in heavy dependence on their former colonial masters. This phenomenon came to be known as neo-colonialism, a term coined by Kwame Nkrumah to describe "power without responsibility" and "exploitation without redress" (Nkrumah, 1966). By examining the available evidence, this research aims to

shed light on the nature of the relationship between China and Nigeria and evaluate whether it can be classified as neo-colonial.

The growth and development of Nigeria have historically received support from various countries, primarily Western nations such as the US, The European Union countries, and Japan. However, in recent years, China has emerged as the leading provider of development finance to Nigeria (Adewole & Ogunrinu, 2019). Preliminary literature analysis indicates a significant presence of Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) and loans in Nigeria, driven primarily by economic motives, as China seeks new markets for its goods. According to Zhang (2023), this FDI has peaked in 2013 and has since been in the decline, a decline which has been accelerated by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. The economic downturn caused by the pandemic has led some countries into financial distress and this created the need for debt restructuring negotiations with their Chinese lenders.

It is these renegotiations that have provided fodder for the claim that those loans were a “debt trap” and a tool in a kind of neo-colonial agenda for China. The truth to those claims is part of what is the focus of this research, combined with an attempt to bridge the notable knowledge gap that exists regarding the potential impact of Chinese investment on Nigerian foreign policy direction.

1.3 Hypothesis

This dissertation states the hypothesis that the relationship between the two countries is one of mutual benefit. Foreign interference in domestic affairs being an issue of zero tolerance for both countries. The principle of self-determination and the freedom of all people became a crucial issue in international politics following the establishment of

the UN after the Second World War. This principle was eventually included in the International Bill of Rights in the 1960s, at the insistence of newly independent states from Asia and Africa, albeit with a vague definition. For China and African countries, the principle of self-determination is relevant to their relationship, as both have a zero-tolerance policy towards foreign interference in domestic affairs. With the end of the second world war and the establishment of the United Nations in the same year, the principle of self-determination and the freedom of all people became a very important issue in international politics (UN, 2018).

To claim that this relationship between China and Nigeria is one underpinned by neo-colonial ambitions on the part of China is to overlook the agency of these African countries. Such a viewpoint neglects the valuable lessons they have learned over many years of dealing with European colonization and their subsequent struggle for independence. Furthermore, such a standpoint would also neglect that while China being a more developed member of the global south, it has a shared history with African nations. This shared history encompasses collaborative efforts in the pursuit of self-determination, economic development, and international cooperation, challenging simplistic characterizations of their diplomatic ties.

1.4 Research Question

The research question in this thesis is *"How does China's relationship with Nigeria amount to neo-colonialism?"* In answering this question, first I investigate to see if the underlying premise of the question is correct by stating that the relationship the relationship between the two countries reveals a neo-colonial characteristic. I also try to achieve the objective of understanding how China has or even if they can influence Nigerian foreign policy and what that means for Nigerian foreign policy decision

making in the face of growing tensions between China and the West. The research question seeks to address significant gaps in the literature concerning Sino-Nigerian relations by examining the extent to which China's engagement with Nigeria can be characterized as neo-colonialism. By looking into the dynamics of this relationship and exploring how China may influence Nigerian foreign policy, I try to contribute to advancing theoretical and methodological frameworks within the discipline of International Relations. The research question also offers insights into the implications of growing tensions between China and the West for Nigeria, thereby enriching the understanding of complex geopolitical landscape in the contemporary world.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The aim of this section is to provide a theoretical foundation of the thesis by using the relevant academic perspective on the concepts I outline in the conceptualization subheading. Therefore, the aim is to guide the subsequent analysis by showing what lens will be used to interpret the relations between Nigeria and China. I combine postcolonial perspectives in international relations and dependency theory in my analysis. Post-colonial perspective helps in understanding how states navigate their foreign policy objectives against the backdrop of the legacy of colonialism, foreign interference in domestic politics and economics even after independence, power differentials, and cultural dynamics. This approach helps shed light on how this legacy has continued to shape the interactions and decision-making processes of states in the international stage. Only by first understanding the structural inequalities that have led us to this moment in time, can we be able to deconstruct and challenge the dominant narratives of international relations that often perpetuate unequal power dynamics and marginalize the voices and agency of formerly colonized nations i.e *China is carrying out a neo-colonial ambition by using a sort of debt-trap diplomacy in African countries*

like Nigeria. Through a post-colonial lens, we not only unravel the complexities of historical legacies but also uncover the ongoing struggles for autonomy, self-determination, and sovereignty in the face of entrenched systems of oppression and exploitation. This kind of critical analysis serves as an important foundation for understanding the foreign policy engine that spurs Sino-Nigerian relations.

I examine the history of the relationship between Nigeria and China and how national interests, pursued by the leadership of both countries, have guided that relationship. This helps in understanding how Nigeria sees itself vis-à-vis China and the West and how their foreign policy decisions so far reflect that. Post-colonial perspectives in the study of international relations and foreign policy provide a reasonable alternative explanation where the grand theories approach like Realism or Liberalism fall short (Fitzgerald, 2019).

According to Epstein (2014), theorising international relations from a postcolonial perspective is not just about creating a new “-ism”, but rather it’s about highlighting how power dynamics work and lead to shifts from norms to normalisation. This perspective helps in understanding how historical events like colonization still affect how countries interact today. Moreover, Epstein argues that a postcolonial approach changes how we think about time, identity, and how we deal with differences in international relations. It gives agency to voices outside the usual Western-centric view, leading to a more diverse and nuanced understanding of the world. Realisms approach of looking at international relations through a prism of power politics and zero-sum games often overlooks how power dynamics are asymmetrical and the consequence of historical inequality on countries (Seth, 2013).

I attempt to explain how the relationship between Nigeria and China may or may not be neo-colonial in nature by first examining their respective foreign policies and national interests. This analysis considers the goals and motivations of the states involved, as well as the strategies they employ to pursue their interests. Additionally, the lens of dependency theory is used to understand the ways in which Nigeria and China navigate their relationship, taking into account the impact of historical foreign interference and existing global power imbalances. This is affected by factors such as trade, investment, and development aid. It would help in understanding how economic dependency can lead to political dependency and how it shapes the foreign policy of the dependent country (Junbo, 2014).

1.6 Methodology

The methodology that is adopted in this research is a combination of various methods. The qualitative analysis is made from data collected from a review of secondary data in the form of archival documents, framing of speeches by Nigerian and Chinese leaders and text from trade and investment negotiations. The research design has a systematic approach employed in investigating China's relationship with Nigeria and assessing the potential manifestations of neo-colonialism. Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, the research aims to analyse diplomatic speeches, scrutinize economic indicators, and delve into relevant historical contexts.

Content analysis is used on the data collected from the above-mentioned sources to see if there are patterns which helps in explaining the socio-political and economic reason for Chinese investment in Nigeria and see if those reasons can be said to be because of neo-colonial ambitions. A quantitative analysis is conducted to see the distribution of Chinese investment in Nigeria across various sectors and regions. The data for this is obtained also from secondary sources like newspapers articles,

academic journals, trade and investment data from respective government offices and databases.

Due to the analytical nature of this research, I examine the existing literature to make use of secondary data obtained from other quantitative analyses. By interpreting those results to understand how effectively loans and investment in Nigeria grant China political leverage to influence foreign policy, we see whether this happens and if it can be classified as neo-colonial on the part of China.

The reason for the mixed methods approaches in this research is because the results of the two different forms of analysis when combined, provides a more nuanced answer to the research question. A historical analysis of the bilateral relations is employed in this research. This is for the purpose of understanding how diplomatic relations between the two countries has evolved over the years and to find out exactly what the key motivations are behind their relations and the effect China has had on the Nigerian economy.

1.7 Conceptualization

In order to analyze the relationship between Nigeria and China, it is important to clarify certain concepts that are pertinent to this discussion. These concepts include *foreign policy*, *national interest*, *diplomacy*, *neo-colonialism*, *economic dependency*, *imperialism*. The aim of this chapter is to point out the recurring concepts in this thesis and how they are employed. Clarifying these concepts helps in providing a clear understanding of the issues at hand and facilitate a more insightful analysis of the relationship between Nigeria and China.

Foreign policy according to Tayfur (1994) is a subfield within international relations which has to do with, broadly speaking, how states behave towards other states in the international system through their authorized agents. A comprehensive exploration of the foreign policies of the countries under consideration will be provided in dedicated chapters, offering a more in-depth analysis of their specific approaches, priorities, and implications. This is not to say that what happens within a state has little to no effect on its foreign policy, on the contrary, Wallace (1974) points out that foreign policy serves as a bridge between the nation state and its international environment. It encompasses a range of diplomatic, economic, military, and cultural activities that a country undertakes to safeguard its national interests and promote its objectives in the international arena. Foreign policy decisions are shaped by a country's political, economic, and social priorities, as well as its perception of the global landscape and its position within it. The ultimate goal of foreign policy is to enhance a country's security, prosperity, and influence on the global stage. In this research dealing with Sino-Nigerian relations, the crucial angles are economic, social and political.

Economic dependency refers to a condition in which one country's economy is dominated by another to such an extent that the dependent country finds it challenging to disentangle itself from the relationship. This theory finds its roots in Marxist and structuralist perspectives, and one influential figure in this field is former Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

At the heart of dependency theory is a rejection of the idea that underdevelopment is primarily caused by internal factors or a lack of capitalist progress. Instead, dependency theorists argue that underdevelopment in Latin America, as well as in other regions, is a consequence of the historical development of global capitalism.

According to dependency theory, the economic, political, and social structures of developing countries were shaped by external forces, such as multinational corporations and global economic institutions, which perpetuated their subordinate position in the global order (Dietz, 1980).

Cardoso's work has shed light on the dynamics of economic dependency and its impact on developing countries. Cardoso (1979) has observed that African economists, influenced by Marxist analysis and Latin American theories of dependency, have also put forth models for interpreting the development experiences of African and Asian nations (Rodney, 1972; Barone, 1982; Amin, 1989). While delving into the extensive body of work on this subject is beyond the scope of this research, I aim to draw upon the insights gained from their analysis and critique of dependency theory. These insights help unravel the complexities that underlie the present-day relations between Nigeria and China. This is because it is important to acknowledge different viewpoints such as how China's diplomatic and economic activity in Nigeria can still perpetuate dependency dynamics, albeit under a different guise.

By incorporating the findings of African and Asian economists and their engagement with dependency theory, this research seeks to enhance our understanding of the intricate dynamics shaping the Nigeria-China relationship. It acknowledges that economic dependencies can significantly influence the power dynamics and interactions between nations, and by exploring these complexities, we can gain valuable insights into the nature and implications of the two countries engagement and thus their foreign policy.

Diplomacy is the practice of managing and conducting negotiations, dialogue, and relationships between countries. Watsons (1991), defines it to be “a negotiation of political entities which acknowledge each other's independence”. It involves the exchange of information, ideas, and positions in a peaceful and diplomatic manner to resolve conflicts, advance common interests, and promote cooperation. Diplomatic efforts are typically carried out by diplomats and foreign service officers through diplomatic channels, such as embassies, consulates, and international organizations. Diplomacy plays a crucial role in maintaining peaceful relations, fostering mutual understanding, and facilitating cooperation between nations. Economic enticement is one tool out of many used in diplomatic efforts by countries in a bid to achieve their interests. The issue here though is finding out how diplomacy works between China and Nigeria and see if the evidence supports the narrative of a neo colonial agenda being carried out by China. According to Saeki (1995), the attraction of China's enormous market is lending strength to its position in international negotiations. The volatile situation in global trade caused by the Trump administration’s protectionist trade policies and the COVID-19 pandemic created a situation where China would be able to leverage its huge market in international negotiations (Sheng et al. 2019). This shows that for a long time China has been acutely aware of the benefits afforded to it -by its economic strength- in diplomacy.

According to Imoukhuede (2016), a country's foreign policy objectives are derived from its national interest, which encompasses the vital goals, values, and objectives crucial for the nation's survival, security, and well-being. Throughout Nigeria's history, different leaders have pursued various approaches in the pursuit of national interest.

However, internal challenges such as insecurity, widespread poverty, and corruption have hindered Nigeria's ability to effectively pursue its national interest.

Nigerian foreign policy has been guided by important objectives such as Pan-Africanism, multilateralism, and regional/global peace and security. These objectives reflect Nigeria's commitment to promoting unity, cooperation, and stability within the African continent and beyond. While these policies are noble, there is a need to critically evaluate their suitability in advancing Nigeria's development and elevating its global standing. It is also essential to consider the national interest of China in the context of Nigeria-China relations.

China, as a rising global power, has its own set of national interests, which include economic growth, resource acquisition, regional influence, and the protection of its sovereignty and security. China's engagement with African countries, including Nigeria, is driven by its pursuit of these interests. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of Nigeria-China relations requires an understanding of how the national interests of both countries intersect and diverge. It is crucial to identify areas of mutual benefit and explore avenues for cooperation that align with Nigeria's development objectives while considering China's own priorities and aspirations on the global stage.

Imperialism: Kruger (1955), claims that it is difficult to ascribe a meaningful definition to this term as it has been used so many times in so many different contexts that are sometimes contradictory. Despite this, I maintain that there are many common threads in all the different definitions provided by scholars that we can be able to weave some sense of what the terms entails in every given context.

Within the context of this research the definition of imperialism I adopt is one that is derived from the works of Lenin, (1917) and Hobson, (1902). Hobson contents that imperialism is not a matter of preference but a matter of necessity. It becomes essential to acquire markets for expanding industries and to discover new avenues for investing surplus capital. He thus defines imperialism as

“The endeavor of the great controllers of industry to broaden the channel for the flow of their surplus wealth by seeking foreign markets and foreign investments to take off the goods and capital they cannot sell or use at home” (Hobson, 1902).

Lenin went ahead to give his version of imperialisms definition as:

“Imperialism is the monopoly stage of capitalism, or, capitalism in that stage of development in which the domination of monopolies and finance capital has taken shape; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance, in which the division of the world by the international trusts has begun, and in which the partition of all the territory of the earth by the greatest capitalist countries has been completed” (Lenin, 1917).

From these two definitions we can understand imperialism in the context of this research to be a stage of capitalist development characterized by monopolies, huge amounts of financial capital, pursuit of foreign market to expand the flow of surplus wealth.

Neo-colonialism is a concept that captures the enduring forms of dominance and control exerted by former colonial powers or other powerful nations over formerly colonized or developing countries. It represents a continuation or reassertion of colonial relationships in new guises, often through economic, political, and cultural means (Nkrumah, 1965 p.48).

While the precise definition of neo-colonialism may vary depending on the context, there are common threads within scholarly discourse that shed light on its essence. One notable perspective is articulated by Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, who played a crucial role in popularizing the concept. Nkrumah defines neo-colonialism as "the last stage of imperialism" where independence is granted on the surface, but economic and political control is maintained through various mechanisms (Nkrumah, 1965).

In the context of this research, neo-colonialism can be understood as a phenomenon characterized by economic dependency, unequal power relations, and the continuation of exploitative practices even after formal independence. It manifests through the dominance of multinational corporations, foreign investments, and unequal trade relations that perpetuate the economic subordination of formerly colonized nations. Furthermore, neo-colonialism encompasses political influence, often exerted through international institutions, conditional aid, and geopolitical strategies that shape the policies and decisions of developing countries.

Cultural imperialism is another facet of neo-colonialism, as powerful nations promote their values, norms, and cultural products, leading to the erosion of local cultures and identities. In examining neo-colonialism, it is important to recognize that not all interactions between powerful nations and developing countries are inherently neo-colonial. However, the key distinction lies in the asymmetrical power dynamics and the perpetuation of structural inequalities that hinder genuine self-determination, sustainable development, and the fulfilment of national aspirations. By comprehending neo-colonialism within this framework, we can critically analyze the impact of external influences on the sovereignty, economic development, and overall well-being

of formerly colonized or developing countries. It prompts us to assess the extent to which neo-colonial dynamics may be present in the relations between powerful nations, such as China, and African countries like Nigeria, and to examine the potential implications for their foreign policies, economic development, and pursuit of national interests.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The finding of this thesis is important because it attempts to show what direction Nigeria will lean towards in the future when it is faced with a choice between China and the US in the event of a confrontation between the two great powers. This thesis is important to the field of foreign policy analysis, international relations and critical post-colonial studies as its empirical findings advance the theories in these fields. I would like to highlight the fact that the conventional theories school of thought is not enough to properly explain interactions between the two countries.

1.9 Organization of the Thesis

The first chapter of this thesis sets to serve as a foundation. It lays the groundwork for a lot of the background information the reader needs to understand the research. It includes the problem statement, hypothesis, research question, significance and a section on conceptualization where key terms used throughout the research are explained. The second and third chapter expand on the literature review and focus mainly on the analysis of Chinese and Nigerian foreign policy respectively. The second chapter focuses on an analysis of Chinese foreign policy and the third chapter focuses on my analysis on Nigerian foreign policy. The fourth chapter focuses on data analysis. Due to the mixed methods approach that be adopted, quantitative and qualitative data is analyzed. Quantitative analysis, drawing from United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), journals, and news articles,

examines FDI and loan data, dissecting sectors of Chinese investment. This numerical lens aims to unveil economic nuances within the relationship.

Concurrently, qualitative data, obtained through thematic and content analysis of leaders' speeches, delves into diplomatic interactions. By aligning quantitative economic insights with qualitative diplomatic discourse, I try to test the consistency between rhetoric and actions, identifying patterns that either corroborate or counter neo-colonial narratives. This holistic synthesis offers a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted dynamics governing the Sino-Nigerian relationship. The fifth chapter concludes the thesis and discusses the results and conclusion drawn.

Chapter 2

CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY

The aim of this chapter is to identify key themes, trends, and debates within the existing body of literature concerning China's foreign policy strategies, particularly in its interactions with African nations like Nigeria. By critically assessing academic contributions, the chapter aims to establish a solid foundation for understanding the motives, and implications of China's foreign policy initiatives. This exploration encompasses a range of topics, including diplomatic principles, economic motivations, and geopolitical considerations, providing a nuanced backdrop for the subsequent analysis of China's relationship with Nigeria.

China's involvement in Africa can be traced back to the 1950s and 1960s when it provided support to African countries during their struggles for independence from colonial rule. However, China's current phase of engagement with Africa started with the establishment of FOCAC in 2000, which aimed to enhance China's economic and diplomatic ties with Africa. Since then, China's engagement with Africa has been steadily increasing, and it is now one of the continent's largest trading partners and investors. (Okolo, 2016).

China's investment in Africa is carried out by both private and state-owned enterprises in various sectors, including energy, transportation, real estate, mining, and agriculture. The Chinese government has also provided development aid to many

African countries in the form of grants, interest-free loans, and concessional loans. This investment is carried out by Chinese private and state-owned enterprises towards many different sectors, namely energy, transportation, real estate, mining and agriculture (Brautigam, 2021). There is a heated debate in the literature in trying to answer the question of whether China's presence in Africa is evidence of south-south cooperation or just another chapter in the exploitation of the continent for foreign ends.

An example of this is the building of the headquarters of the African Union (AU) in Addis Ababa which served as a \$200 million gift from the Chinese and served to boost trade between the two. However, allegations which were denied by both the AU and China suggested that the building was a Trojan horse which was used to spy on the AU. Another of the criticisms levelled against China's engagement with Africa is that it is motivated by a desire to extract natural resources from the continent and that it often leads to environmental degradation and human rights abuses.

There are also concerns about the impact of China's involvement on local industries and employment. In recent years, there have also been concerns about the debt incurred by African countries as a result of their engagement with China. Critics have accused China of engaging in debt-trap diplomacy, whereby it provides loans to African countries that they are unable to repay, resulting in China taking control of strategic assets or gaining political leverage (Wang, 2022).

From the study of a single session of United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) voting patterns, Meyers (1966) attempted to understand how African countries vote on the international stage. From his analysis he was able to determine that African countries tend to vote as a caucus especially on issues that had to do with

decolonization and self-determination, racism and apartheid more African representation in the UN and even on issues that are not seen as African issues such as denuclearization. Due to their lack of individual material power, African countries rely on their combined strength when it comes to having an effect on the global scale. This has remained the case even today since the time of Meyers study.

According to Panin et al. (2023) however, African states have become more divided in their voting patterns in the UNGA over the years. African countries due to a myriad of factors (i.e., political instability, corruption, insecurity etc.) have been unable catch up with the rest of the world in terms of development. China seems to recognize this capacity for caucusing by African nations, and wants to be able to leverage its investment and diplomatic ties with the African continent to support itself on the international stage.

2.1 Strategic Diplomacy: China's Effective Influence on UNHRC Votes through African Alliances

The reciprocal relationship between China and African countries is clearly observable in recent events, specifically exemplified by the vote held at the UNHRC to discuss China's human rights situation in Xinjiang (US Mission to the United Nations, 2022). The motion was brought after the publishing of a report by the office of the outgoing UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR, 2022), which claimed that there were human rights violations happening in the Xinxiang autonomous region. China's response to the report was to blame OHCHR as an intervention as its claims below reveals;

“Based on the disinformation and lies fabricated by anti-China forces and out of presumption of guilt, the so-called “assessment” distorts China’s laws and policies, wantonly smears and slanders China, and interferes in China’s internal affairs, which violates principles including dialogue and cooperation,

and non-politicization in the field of human rights, and also undermines the credibility of the OHCHR.” (OHCHR, 2022)

The US and Norway, backed by other Western states, introduced draft decision L.6 to debate on the findings of the report. Despite increased commentary by Western countries officials and their media regarding the reported violations in Xinjiang, the vote to initiate the debate failed to garner sufficient support, largely due to the opposition from numerous African member states and other members from the global south. This instance vividly portrays the significant influence and support that China enjoys among African countries and other developing nations, a dynamic that stems from their robust economic and diplomatic connections.

According to Verdirame (2022), the defeat of the motion to debate the situation of human rights in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China, happened as a result of broad external factors such as the leveraging of political, diplomatic and economic power to influence the position of states in that debate. Critics of China would rush to say that this is an example of China flexing its imperial muscles and exercising some sort of neo-colonial power over countries that abstained or rejected the vote on the motion. However, a closer examination reveals that for those claims to be correct, there are criteria’s that must be met which would show that China does have the ability and intent to carry out an imperial/neo-colonial agenda. Criteria such as; proof that China did threaten or incentivize specific behavior beyond traditional diplomatic engagement, the outcome directly benefitting China's interests at the expense of the Uyghur people or international human rights principles, China's influence creating a broader pattern of exploitation or unequal relations that’s beyond this specific incident.

This event highlights a mutually beneficial association between China and Africa, where both parties derive advantages from their collaborative endeavors. The strong economic ties, characterized by trade partnerships, investments, and infrastructure projects, have fostered interdependence and cemented the foundation of this relationship. Furthermore, China's proactive approach towards engaging with African nations through diplomacy, cultural exchanges, and educational initiatives has contributed to fostering goodwill and rapport.

The failed vote to address China's human rights situation in Xinjiang at the UNHRC offers a significant insight into the complex dynamics of the West's rivalry with China within international organizations. It reveals how other states are inevitably drawn into this rivalry and find themselves compelled to take sides. In this context, China has adeptly demonstrated its ability to wield soft power and garner international support.

The episode underscores the intricate power dynamics at play, where China's influence and persuasive tactics have swayed countries to align with its stance on the global stage. By effectively utilizing soft power, China has managed to cultivate favorable relationships and shape the narratives surrounding contentious issues, such as human rights concerns in Xinjiang.

The situation highlights the broader context of competition and rivalry between the West and China, extending beyond mere economic and geopolitical spheres. It illustrates how this rivalry permeates international organizations, where states find themselves caught between competing powers and forced to make decisions that align with their interests or reflect the influence exerted upon them.

In essence, the failed vote on Xinjiang serves as a reminder that China's diplomatic finesse and skillful use of soft power have enabled it to rally countries to its side, even on highly contentious issues. It showcases China's growing ability to shape international narratives and cultivate support, challenging the traditional dominance of Western powers within international organizations. This influence is not solely rooted in economic ties but also stems from a broader framework of diplomatic engagement and mutual benefits. As a result, African member states often face the delicate balancing act of addressing human rights concerns while simultaneously navigating the complexities of their relationship with China vis-a-vis the west.

Consequently, African countries often find themselves compelled to align their interests with China, even in situations where concerns regarding human rights violations or controversial issues arise. This alignment can be seen as a consequence of the favorable economic and diplomatic support that China provides, which is perceived as instrumental for the growth and development of African nations. When critical issues such as human rights violations are brought to the international stage, the voting patterns of African member states may reflect their inclination to safeguard the mutually beneficial relationship they share with China.

2.2 Navigating Tensions: China's Strategic Diplomacy in Africa Amidst US Antagonism

The perception of China as an existential threat to the dominance of the US is a prevalent viewpoint among many Western political analysts and policymakers. However, Sachs (2019) argues that this hard-liner perspective could have disastrous consequences if adopted into the framework of official US foreign policy. During the US President Donald Trump's administration (2017-2021), Ambassador John Bolton,

the National Security Adviser, frequently referred to China as an "existential threat" to the US and advocated for stronger measures to restrict China's global activities (Shipman & Holbrook, 2022). This kind of language from influential American diplomats raises questions about how other countries will respond and adjust their foreign policies in light of this characterization.

The notion of China as an existential threat suggests a deep concern about the potential erosion of American influence and power in the face of China's rising global stature. However, Sachs contends that pursuing an overly confrontational approach may hinder constructive engagement and cooperation, leading to a less stable and more fractured global order (Sachs, 2019).

The use of this language by top American diplomats underscores the gravity of the situation and has significant implications for international relations. It prompts countries around the world to reassess their foreign policies and carefully consider their relationships with both China and the US. As the global balance of power continues to evolve, the choices made by countries in response to this characterization will shape the future trajectory of international relations.

It is essential for policymakers to approach this complex issue with a nuanced understanding, recognizing both the challenges and opportunities presented by China's rise on the global stage. Rather than solely viewing China as an existential threat, a more balanced and constructive approach may be conducive to fostering dialogue, cooperation, and the pursuit of mutually beneficial outcomes in an interconnected world.

The international community, led by the US, continues to exert pressure on China across various fronts, including human rights violations concerning the Uighur population, energy policies impacting climate change, and economic strategies involving currency manipulation (Jackson, 2013). This places Nigeria in a challenging position, torn between avoiding antagonizing China, its largest bilateral lender, and maintaining relationships with its Western partners. Notably, one of China's significant economic diplomacy endeavors is the BRI. With the aim of fostering regional connectivity and stimulating economic development through infrastructure projects, the BRI seeks to create an extensive network of roads, railways, ports, and other infrastructure across Asia, Europe, and Africa.

For Nigeria, navigating these dynamics involves a delicate balance. While the country relies on Chinese investments and financial support for its development projects, it must also consider its relationships with Western partners who may have concerns regarding China's practices. As the largest economy in Africa, Nigeria's strategic position makes it a crucial player in the region's economic landscape.

The Chinese government's commitment to the BRI presents Nigeria with opportunities for infrastructure development and increased connectivity, which can positively impact its economic growth and regional integration. However, it also raises concerns about potential debt dependency, environmental impacts, and the influence of Chinese investment in the country.

Nigeria faces the challenge of effectively managing its relationships with both China and its Western partners. Striking a balance between benefiting from Chinese investments and adhering to international standards and norms becomes crucial for the

country. Engaging in dialogue with all stakeholders and pursuing a nuanced foreign policy approach that safeguards national interests while addressing global concerns will be key to Nigeria's position in this complex geopolitical landscape.

Undoubtedly, the prevailing global political and economic order that has persisted since the end of World War II in 1945 is undergoing a profound transformation since the end of the Cold War in 1990. This transformation is significantly propelled by China's remarkable economic growth and its strategic utilization of this latent power to cultivate influence with other nations, thereby challenging the Western dominance of the global order. This is due to its political ideologies of communist authoritarianism are in stark contrast to those liberal democratic and capitalist ideas of the west. This research critically examines the intricate dynamics characterizing Nigeria's relationship with China, particularly in light of the potential advantages and risks associated with China's investments in the country will affect Nigeria's foreign policy.

By shedding light on these complex dynamics, this study offers valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of Nigeria's engagement with China and its foreign policy formulation mechanism. The findings presented herein hold significance not only for Nigeria but also for other developing nations that are actively involved in similar interactions with China. Policymakers in these countries can draw upon Nigeria's experiences to better comprehend how China's investments may impact their own economies and societies. Moreover, the analysis provides guidance on how to proactively manage this relationship to maximize benefits while mitigating risks.

In this regard, this research assumes a vital role as a reference point for policymakers worldwide who seek to navigate the challenges and opportunities inherent in their

diplomatic engagements with China. The analysis of Nigeria-China relations offers a compelling case study, alerting other developing countries to potential implications as they formulate their own diplomatic strategies vis-à-vis China. It serves as a metaphorical canary in the coal mine, offering crucial insights and lessons for other nations to consider when crafting their own paths forward in managing their relationships with China.

This thesis contributes to the broader understanding of the evolving global order and the shifting dynamics between nations. By delving into the nuances of China's economic investments, diplomatic overtures, and strategic initiatives, it offers valuable insights into how Nigeria navigates the complexities of balancing its ties with China and Western partners. It underscores the significance of China's rise as a transformative force and provides valuable insights that can inform policymaking in other countries. As China's influence grows, Nigeria's foreign policy faces the challenge of harmonizing economic interests with international standards. By drawing upon the experiences of Nigeria, policymakers in other countries can effectively navigate the complexities of their relationships with China, ensuring that they harness the potential benefits while adeptly addressing the associated challenges.

2.3 Chinese Foreign Policy in The Face of Current Fragile International System

The aim of this part is to provide reasons as to why I think the international system is at a fragile point. By using information from geopolitical events, regional conflicts, shifts in alliances, and other destabilizing factors that collectively challenge the stability and coherence of the international system, I set the stage for exploring China's evolving role in this system and how its relations with Nigeria affect that. The

contemporary global order is facing undeniable fragility. This is evident through a series of pivotal international events. Among these, we can point to what Russia calls a “special military operation” in Ukraine, the internal discord within the EU regarding its stance on nations like Iran, Russia, and China. Moreover, NATO’s issues with internal turbulence, particularly regarding the accession of new member states, and the ongoing ramifications of Israel's actions in the Palestinian territories. These events collectively reflect a discernible shift in the landscape of international relations, akin to navigating a complex game of multidimensional chess. In this evolving arena, countries like Nigeria and China need to take critical steps in shaping their alliances and demonstrating the alignment between their rhetoric and actions.

John Ikenberry states that if there was a prevailing ‘American-led liberal hegemonic order’ since the end of the Cold War, that order is now in crisis (Ikenberry, 2011). Ten years after he made this statement, we find that the world has only become more fragile. The fragility of the current international system sets the backdrop for my thesis. This fragility arises from changing power dynamics, realignments of global alliances, and a re-evaluation of established international norms. It's a lens through which to analyze how nations like Nigeria navigate their foreign policies in an ever-shifting environment. This fragility provides an opportunity for China to leverage its economic and diplomatic relationships with African countries like Nigeria. By looking at the ways which it chooses to use that leverage we can determine if it harbors neo-colonial ambitions towards Nigeria and the look at how Nigerian foreign policy will react towards that.

According to Chen (Chen, 2016), a big part of how this fragility has come about is the change of China from being an order taker to an order shaper. That is to say that in the

past China has been on the side-lines when it comes to the making and shaping of the global order but following its meteoric rise and new outward approach by its current leadership, it is now playing a role as an order shaper. As these global dynamics shift, China may exploit these uncertainties to advance its interests.

1. Russian Special Military Operation in Ukraine: The ongoing Russian operation in Ukraine has repercussions for global politics and trade. Nigeria's response to this conflict can be indicative of how it manages its foreign policy and economic relationships. Does it side with specific major powers like China, and if so, why? Or does it maintain a neutral stance that serves its interests? China's response, particularly its stance on major international issues and alliances, can serve as a case study. Does China use its influence with countries like Nigeria to shape their positions, aligning them with its neo-colonial agenda?

2. EU Cohesion (or lack thereof): China's relationship with the EU and its role in divisions within the EU could be a strategic move in its neo-colonial playbook. How it manages to foster economic ties while influencing EU member states can demonstrate its approach to power dynamics and economic control. The EU's internal divisions over the acceptance of Sweden and Finland and inconsistencies in its stance on issues like relations with China and Russia are significant. It's a gauge of Nigeria's independent decision-making within the framework of international relations. Does Nigeria align its policies with the EU or independently based on its priorities and interests?

3. Turbulence in NATO: Nigeria's response to events like the resistance of Turkey to new NATO membership and the alliance's internal shifts could highlight its approach to these changing dynamics. This can shed light on whether Nigeria seeks to balance its relationships with Western powers and countries like China. This

turbulence within NATO and China's engagement with NATO member states, including Turkey, are important in assessing the possibility of China's neo-colonial strategies. Additionally, there is a challenge posed by the ambitions of French President Emmanuel Macron of a European security framework that is independent from NATO. Is China making inroads into NATO's periphery to further its objectives? How does this relate to its engagement with Nigeria?

4. Existing and Previous Neo-Colonial Situations Across the Globe: Nigeria's stance on existing and previous neo-colonial issues, such as the Israeli occupation of Palestine, the apartheid in South Africa, and French relations with west African countries like Niger, Burkina Faso etc., to mention a few, can reflect its values and commitment to international law and help make clear how its behavior matches its intent. The thesis explores whether Nigeria's position on such matters is influenced by its alignment with major global players (i.e., China or the West) and how these fits into the broader picture of neo-colonialism.

By integrating these observations into my research, we can explore how China, as a significant global actor, navigates the changing dynamics of the international system to further its neo-colonial ambitions (if any), particularly in its relationships with countries like Nigeria. I also scrutinize how Nigeria positions itself and its foreign policy in the context of an international system characterized by fragility and shifting dynamics. The interplay between global events and Nigeria's strategic decisions is essential to understanding its potential susceptibility or resistance to neo-colonial influences, particularly in its relationship with China.

By critically examining the patterns of Chinese investment and loans, the research aims to understand the underlying dynamics and assess whether the current

relationship can be characterized as neo-colonial. Through a thorough analysis of available evidence and scholarly insights, this thesis contributes to the existing literature on Nigeria-China relations and try to bridge the knowledge gap into the implications of Chinese investment for Nigeria's foreign policy trajectory.

This is important for my thesis about how China deals with Nigeria and whether its actions can rightly be termed neo-colonial. This is because countries like Nigeria can affect how the world is changing, and we want to see how big countries like China and the US treat smaller ones. We're also curious about what China is up to in this changing world and if they might be trying to act like old-style colonizers.

By going into a historical analysis of China's foreign policy and focusing on their support for anti-colonial movements in different regions. The aim is to scrutinize whether this support was genuinely driven by a desire to assist nations in their quest for independence or if there might have been hidden motives, akin to a "trojan gift," as some critics have suggested. By examining China's historical involvement in anti-colonial struggles, I hope to gain insights into their motives and objectives, particularly in their modern foreign relations.

In parallel, I'll also look at the actions of Western countries, with the US taking the spotlight, in the context of anticolonial movements and also their approach to foreign development assistance. This comparative analysis reveals how the West responded to these struggles and whether their intentions were solely aimed at aiding nations in their fight for independence or if there were deeper, self-serving interests. The goal is to provide a balanced perspective and examine how different global actors have engaged

with former colonized nations in the past, shedding light on any discrepancies in how China is perceived today in relation to its foreign policy.

The foreign policy of African countries aligns closely with their national interests, particularly in their pursuit of rapid economic development and increased international stature. The Nigerian government recognizes the importance of maintaining a healthy relationship with China to achieve its national objectives, as China has proven to be a more willing and supportive partner compared to the West. Furthermore, African countries value the non-interference approach that China takes in their internal affairs. Unlike some Western nations, like the US, that may attach conditionalities to their assistance, China's engagement is seen as more respectful of their sovereignty and national autonomy. This attitude was emphasized by Chinese leader Xi Jinping during a speech of him at the at the FOCAC conference in Beijing, 2008.

African countries appreciate the flexibility and pragmatism exhibited by China in addressing their developmental requirements, including providing aid, debt relief, and infrastructure investments without imposing a specific political or ideological agenda. In its pursuit of national interests, Nigeria recognizes the tangible benefits of maintaining a healthy relationship with China. Nigeria understands that China's investments and support not only contribute to its economic growth but also enhance its international standing. By partnering with China, Nigeria can leverage China's economic power and diplomatic influence to amplify its voice on the global stage and secure favorable positions in international forums.

According to Chenru & Obi (2011) “China is in Africa to conduct business that it considers to be mutually beneficial to both. In sum, China has no enemies or friends

in Africa; it only has permanent interests.” That reflects the perspective that China's engagement in Africa is driven by a foreign policy rooted in pursuing its own national interests. According to this view, China's presence in Africa is primarily motivated by economic considerations, seeking mutually beneficial business opportunities rather than establishing alliances based on traditional notions of friendship or enmity. This suggests that China's engagement is guided by pragmatism and a focus on advancing its own national agenda. Likewise, African nations are also aware of their own national interests and pursue partnerships with China based on their own strategic objectives.

African countries recognize the potential benefits of engaging with China in various areas, such as infrastructure development, trade, and investment. They are not merely passive recipients of Chinese influence but actively seek to leverage their engagement with China to advance their own developmental goals. The perception of African nations as passive recipients of Chinese investments, without their own agency or strategic objectives, therefore making themselves susceptible to debt traps is a notion that has been pushed by certain western analysts and policymakers that have an ideological reason to oppose a good relationship between China and other countries that have traditionally been reliant on the west countries. However, it is important to recognize that such a perspective is politically fueled, lacks basis in fact and logic and often overlooks the complex realities of China's engagement with other countries, especially African. This view reflects a longstanding paternalistic approach that has characterized Western engagement with Africa in the past.

Western countries have often assumed a position of superiority, considering themselves as the sole providers of development and progress, while disregarding the agency and aspirations of African nations. This mindset has sometimes resulted in

policies that prioritize Western interests over those of African countries and perpetuate a narrative of dependency. In this sense, both China and African countries are engaged in a dynamic process of pursuing their respective national interests. China's approach, driven by economic and strategic considerations, aligns with its own long-term goals and aspirations. Similarly, African nations seek to maximize the benefits of their engagement with China to address their developmental challenges and enhance their own economic growth and prosperity.

It is important to recognize that the interactions between China and African countries are complex and multifaceted, involving a range of actors, interests, and dynamics. While the pursuit of national interests is a common thread, the nature and scope of these interests may vary among different African countries based on their specific contexts and priorities. To outrightly claim that China is embarking on a neo-colonial project in Africa and trying to bring African countries under its thumb through financial subterfuge without first examining the facts is both morally wrong and intellectually irresponsible.

The *raison d'être* of this research is rooted in the need to critically evaluate the prevalent neo-colonial narrative surrounding China-Nigeria relations. The perception of neo-colonialism arises from concerns about China's economic dominance, resource exploitation, potential debt traps, and the impact on local industries and cultural identities. It is imperative to delve into these concerns to discern the true nature of the China-Nigeria relationship, as this characterization can have significant implications for Nigeria's development trajectory, national interests, and sovereignty. This is because it is essential to move beyond the paternalistic narrative that portrays Africa as a passive recipient and recognize the agency, resilience, and strategic decision-

making of African nations. This recognition allows for a more accurate understanding of the complexities and nuances involved in China-Africa relations. By acknowledging Africa's agency, policymakers and analysts can adopt a more balanced and informed approach that promotes equitable partnerships and mutually beneficial outcomes.

2.4 Origins and Deconstruction of the 'Debt Trap' Narrative: Conditions in China's Economic Engagement and Testing the Narrative with Case Studies

According Brautigam (2019), the origins of this debate about Chinese debt trap diplomacy in Africa can be traced back to a think tank in India in 2017. This paper was later amplified by outlets like the New York Times and The Guardian and even echoed by US government officials as proof of nefarious Chinese activity on the African continent. By November 2018, a google search of “Chinese debt trap” brought up over 1,900,000 results in less than a second (Brautigam, 2019). Despite these criticisms, China's engagement with Africa continues to grow, with both Chinese and African governments expressing their commitment to deepening their economic and diplomatic ties.

Additionally, to term something as a “trap” would imply that the victim was somehow unaware or deceived about the consequences, which may not necessarily be the case in the context of Nigeria-China relations. This is because of Nigeria’s experience with dealing with foreign debt as a result of its engagements with international capital markets e.g., the Paris Club. The Paris Club being a group of wealthy western European countries that provide credit to developing nations like Nigeria. Loans from the Paris Club are usually affiliated with strict repayment conditions that often impose austerity measures which makes countries sacrifice important social welfare programs

to prioritize repayment (Archibong, 2021). Drawing from Nigeria's experience with the Paris Club, any new loan agreement with China would likely go through multiple levels of scrutiny to ensure that repayment would be feasible. The lessons learned from previous debt challenges, including those with the Paris Club, IMF etc., have likely underscored the importance of careful consideration of loan terms, repayment obligations, and overall debt sustainability.

An important aspect of these agreements would be a thorough assessment of the loan's terms and conditions, including interest rates, repayment period, and grace periods. This would ensure that the loan terms are fair, reasonable, and aligned with the borrower's capacity to repay. Additionally, the loan agreement would likely undergo a comprehensive review by legal experts to ensure that the clauses are clear, unambiguous, and do not contain any hidden or unfavorable terms.

Furthermore, the loan agreement would likely be subject to scrutiny by economic and financial experts to assess its potential impact on the borrower's economy, including the projected cash flows, revenue generation, and overall debt burden. This analysis would help determine if the borrower has the necessary resources and capacity to service the loan without jeopardizing its economic stability or risking default.

In addition to financial scrutiny, the loan agreement may also undergo a thorough assessment of its potential socio-economic and environmental impacts. This would involve evaluating the projects or initiatives to be funded by the loan and their potential benefits to the borrower's population and environment, as well as any potential risks or adverse consequences.

Overall, the scrutiny of any new loan agreement would likely involve multiple levels of review by legal, economic, financial, and environmental experts to ensure that it is financially viable, economically beneficial, and aligned with the borrower's capacity to repay. This rigorous examination would help minimize the risks of entering into unsustainable debt arrangements and ensure that repayment is possible without undermining the borrower's economic stability and development prospects.

China sees in Africa a chance to extend its political influence on the world stage but not in the way which other countries have had relations with the continent. When it comes to development aid being given to Africa by Western countries, there has historically been many strings attached to such aid. This is usually in the form of conditions and/or conditionalities that dictate the terms of how the aid will be provided (Bodomo, 2019).

Conditionalities are unequal demands imposed by one party on another in a relationship (Bodomo, 2019). They are extracontractual agreements that favor one party and are not included in the original agreement. For example, a European country may demand that an African country change its political system before investing in it. The Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) that African countries were subjected to during the 1980s and later were typical examples of conditionalities imposed by Western-dominated financial institutions on African countries (Bodomo, 2019).

Conditions on the other hand, represent symmetrical contractual agreements between willing and relatively equal partners with the goal of achieving mutually beneficial outcomes. Every interaction involving countries, companies, or individuals has a fundamental set of guidelines or principles that both parties must adhere to. These

guidelines are referred to as conditions of engagement. For example, a mutually agreed upon interest rate in a loan agreement between an African country or company and a European or Chinese government entity is a condition for the loan transaction, which has been negotiated and agreed upon by both parties (Bodomo, 2019).

Historically, the West's relationship with Africa has often been characterized by the imposition of conditionalities, particularly in the context of economic and financial assistance. A typical example of this would be between Nigeria and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the 1980s, where Nigeria was encouraged by the US backed IMF to carry out several neoliberal austerity policies including the devaluation of its national currency in exchange for a rescue loan by the institution. The imposition of these policies led to dire consequences on that the Nigerian economy still has not been able to fully recover from even today (Okolo, 2016).

The formula that China has opted for with its relationship with the African continent has been one that aims not to impose any socio-political conditionalities along with the investment it provides. The financial conditions to the contracts are not designed in a way that benefits mainly the Chinese institutions. This is in stark contrast to how the Americans and Europeans have historically interacted with the African continent in terms of development assistance. China's foreign policy in has been influenced by the shared historical burdens and identity of both China and Africa, particularly in relation to imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat-capitalism. China's foreign policy towards Africa has been shaped by the common historical experiences and identity of both regions, particularly with regards to imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat-capitalism. Consequently, China has a better grasp of the challenges faced by Africa in terms of economic development, social stability, and peaceful coexistence.

2.4.1 Testing the Debt Trap Narrative with Two Case Studies

In this part, we delve into a case study of Sri Lanka and Zambia, exploring their default on loans from China and the implications of these defaults on their sovereignty, economic interests, and political autonomy. By extrapolating insights from these case studies, the research aims to draw lessons applicable to Nigeria. By scrutinizing the outcomes and responses of Sri Lanka and Zambia, the below discussion seeks to offer nuanced perspectives on the implications of China's financial engagements, shedding light on potential challenges and opportunities for Nigeria. This comparative approach provides a valuable framework for assessing the multifaceted impact of China's economic presence and the debt trap narrative on diverse nations, offering valuable insights for policymakers and scholars alike.

Sri Lanka Case:

This subheading aims to investigate the circumstances surrounding this default, scrutinize the role of debt in these cases, and draw conclusions about the applicability of the debt trap narrative to these real-world instances. Through this case study, I attempt to gain insights into China's behavior and whether there are signs of neocolonial ambitions in its engagement with African nations, such as Nigeria.

One of the key elements of China's engagement with debtor nations is its willingness to engage in pre-default renegotiations. The case of Sri Lanka reveals China's adaptability and flexibility, emphasizing the economic partnership aspect. Central to my analysis is trying to decipher China's motives post-default. If its responses involve harsh penalties, acquisition of strategic assets, or undue political influence, it may indicate the presence of neocolonial objectives. Another crucial factor that the case studies explore is the type of loans provided by China. In instances such as that of Sri Lanka, where loans are resource-backed, involving control over natural resources or

infrastructure, it may signal neocolonial aspirations aimed at securing valuable assets and influence.

The erosion of sovereignty and political influence following a default is a fundamental concern. Through the case of Sri Lanka, I investigate whether China's post-default actions have lasting consequences for the borrowing countries' sovereignty and political autonomy.

According to (Sautman & Hairong, 2019), the case of Sri Lanka leasing its port, the Hambantota International Port (HIP), to China for 99 years does not align with the debt trap narrative often associated with China's BRI. The decision to build HIP was not a Chinese-plotted debt trap; rather, it emerged from Sri Lanka's long-standing plans dating back to the 1920s to establish a port near major Indian Ocean shipping lanes. When Sri Lanka sought financing from India and Japan in 2006-2007, both countries declined, and China became involved only after active persuasion by the Sri Lankan government from 2007-2012.

Contrary to debt trap assertions, the lease of HIP to China did not result from an immediate debt crisis with China. Sri Lanka, due to its long civil war and lower-middle-income status, faced challenges in obtaining concessional loans from sources other than China. Most of the loans from China to build infrastructure projects, including HIP, were concessional, averaging 3.2% interest and repayable over 20 years. By 2016, only a small percentage of Sri Lanka's external debt was owed to China, and it did not play a significant role in any debt crisis. The lease agreement itself was not a debt-for-equity swap. China Merchants Port Holdings (CMPort), a Hong Kong-based firm, put up \$1.12 billion, exceeding HIP's valuation, to receive less

than a 70% share of the lease. The Sri Lanka Port Authority (SLPA) retained more than a 30% share, and China did not erase the HIP loan debt. This arrangement is distinctly different from the notion of debt trap scenarios.

Additionally, the success of CMPort operation of the Colombo International Container Terminal (CICT) suggests a mutually beneficial relationship. CICT became profitable within a year of opening in 2014, contributing significantly to Colombo Port's container traffic. The profitability of Chinese-operated ports in Sri Lanka contradicts the idea of a debt trap where the host country's assets are purportedly seized. In summary, the leasing of Hambantota Port to China is better understood as a strategic economic decision with long-term benefits for both parties, challenging the oversimplified narrative of debt trap diplomacy often associated with China's infrastructure investments.

The authors' interviews with African states contribute to their conclusion by providing empirical evidence and real-world perspectives on Chinese-financed infrastructure projects. Contrary to the notion of China coercively pushing countries into debt traps, the interviews reveal that Chinese-financed projects are often initiated at the local level and require the adoption and support of the host state. This underscores the agency of African states in deciding to engage with China on infrastructure development. The interviews likely shed light on the fact that Chinese investments are not imposed but rather respond to the development priorities and ideas of the host countries. The absence of evidence indicating Chinese inveigling or pressuring countries to build infrastructure aligns with the findings of the interviews. Additionally, the ability of Chinese lenders to restructure loans for countries facing difficulties, as highlighted in

the interviews and supported by recent studies, counters the narrative of China employing debt-trap diplomacy.

Lessons for Nigeria: In considering the Sri Lankan experience with the lease of the HIP there are lessons for Nigeria in navigating potential infrastructure projects and economic engagements. Sri Lanka's endeavor to attract foreign investments, particularly from China, prompts reflection on Nigeria's strategies for balancing economic development, sovereignty, and debt management.

Firstly, Sri Lanka's pursuit of the HIP project was not initiated by a pressing debt situation with China but rather by the country's need for infrastructure development. Nigeria, like Sri Lanka, may face challenges in securing concessional loans from traditional sources due to its economic profile. The nature of Nigeria's economy makes it heavily reliant on proceeds from the sale of crude oil, as Dode (2012) notes, the export of oil accounts for more than 90% of its foreign exchange earnings, so as global oil prices decline, it puts the Nigerian economy in a tough spot as it has to find other sources of revenue to finance its development. Therefore, exploring alternative financing options, including engagement with China, could be a strategic move.

The Sri Lankan case underscores the importance of thoroughly assessing the terms of agreements. Despite concerns about debt entrapment, the majority of Sri Lanka's loans from China for projects like HIP are concessional, with relatively favorable interest rates and extended repayment periods. Nigeria can learn from this experience by carefully negotiating terms that align with its economic and strategic interests. Additionally, the fact that Sri Lanka did not forfeit any national assets to Chinese lenders challenges the notion of a debt-for-equity swap or loss of sovereignty. Nigeria

should scrutinize proposed agreements to ensure that infrastructure projects remain under its control and contribute positively to its economic development.

The Zambia Case:

This is the second case study and it has to do with Zambia's default to China. The purpose of this particular case study is to provide a more precise look into China's foreign policy with African countries and how they engage with those countries in times of economic crises that can grant them the leverage to exert some kind of neo-colonial pressure on the country. This case study would be incomplete without first doing a brief appraisal of China and Zambia's relationship.

Historically China and Zambia have had a very cordial relationship as China was supportive of their efforts at independence and diplomatic relations were established after Zambia's independence in 1964 (Matambo & Onwuegbuchulam, 2021). Chinese investment in Zambia has been prominent since then and is in line with the Chinese rhetoric that their investment in African countries is for the sole purpose of fostering economic development and promoting south-south co-operation.

An example for this is the seminal Tanzania-Zambia Railway (TAZARA), which came about as a result of the state visit of Zambia's founding leader Kenneth Kaunda, to China and his meeting with Mao Zedong (Global Times, 2021). The purpose of this railway line was to bypass landlocked Zambia's dependence on the then colonial Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa. It is not unreasonable therefore, to see this as evidence of China's consistency in terms of its foreign policy towards African countries and developing countries in general.

The economic crisis of the post Covid-19 pandemic caused Zambia to go into default on its Eurobonds payments (Chen, 2023). Negotiation and debt restructuring efforts began under the G20 Common Framework whereby Eurobond holders would get their money through the IMF and Zambia would pay back the IMF at some point in the future. The narrative pushed by Western mass media is that the debt default is as a result of Chinese loans which were always a “debt-trap” but the facts tell a different story.

In the year Zambia defaulted, interest payments to China only amounted to 5.3% of the total, the rest being paid to bilateral and multilateral creditors like the Paris Club, IMF and World Bank Group (Chen, 2023). On top of that, China has on multiple occasions per the Zambians request, provided debt relief of about \$259 million, which is more than all the other western based creditors. The assertion that China is solely responsible for Zambia's economic woes is contradicted by the fact that the Zambian government sought debt relief not only from China but also from private U.S. creditors, such as BlackRock. However, these requests were met with resistance, highlighting the role of non-Chinese actors in shaping Zambia's debt landscape.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen's reluctance to see debt relief aid directed towards repaying China underscores the complexity of the debt dynamics. Moreover, accusations of neocolonialism often overlook the historical context and the role of Western financial institutions, such as the IMF, in shaping Zambia's economic policies. The imposition of unfavorable terms, including austerity measures and tax exemptions for foreign extraction of copper resources, as recommended by the IMF, reveals a more nuanced perspective.

The privatization and trade liberalization policies pushed by the IMF in the late 1990s, particularly in the copper mining industry, had long-term implications, limiting the government's ability to increase taxes on mining companies despite significant growth in mineral exports (Gbadamosi, 2020). In light of these complexities, it becomes evident that labeling China as the sole purveyor of neocolonial ambitions oversimplifies the intricate web of economic influences shaping Zambia's trajectory.

Lessons for Nigeria: Drawing lessons from Zambia's economic challenges and its engagement with China, Nigeria can gain insights into navigating economic crises and managing foreign relations. First of all, the case underscores the importance of a diversified approach to foreign investments and loans, recognizing that economic dependencies on a single partner, whether it be China or any other nation, can pose risks. Nigeria may benefit from adopting a balanced strategy that involves multiple international actors to mitigate potential vulnerabilities.

Secondly, Nigeria can learn the significance of prudent economic policies and governance in times of financial stress. The historical context of Zambia's economic struggles highlights the impact of policies recommended by international financial institutions, such as the IMF, on long-term economic sustainability. Nigeria may find it crucial to critically evaluate and negotiate the terms of financial assistance and debt restructuring, ensuring that imposed conditions align with the country's developmental goals.

Furthermore, the experience of Zambia emphasizes the need for proactive engagement with creditors, including transparent communication and negotiation processes. Nigeria could prioritize open dialogue with both Chinese and Western creditors to

address economic challenges collaboratively, fostering a cooperative environment that safeguards its national interests. In essence, the case study suggests that Nigeria should approach its economic relations with a diversified and strategic mindset, incorporating lessons from Zambia's experiences to build resilience, promote economic sovereignty, and effectively manage potential challenges in the ever-evolving landscape of international finance and geopolitics.

2.5 Divergent Paths: Contrasting US and Chinese Foreign Policy in the Developing World

In 2001, economist Jim O'Neill of Goldman Sachs published a groundbreaking paper that highlighted the tremendous potential of the emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and China (BRIC) to challenge the established G7 nations, consisting of the US, Canada, UK, Germany, France, Italy, and Japan (O'Neill, 2001). This pivotal concept gained further significance in 2010 when South Africa joined the group, forming what we now know as BRICS+. This development marked a notable shift in global power dynamics and served as a catalyst for the call to reform outdated twentieth-century institutions, as emphasized by organizations such as the Council on Foreign Relations (Ayres, 2017).

BRICS+ functions as a vital platform through which these emerging economies assert their need for greater representation in global affairs, recognizing the importance of diverse perspectives and the inclusion of non-Western nations. China's active engagement within BRICS+ exemplifies its cooperative nature and its commitment to collaborative efforts with fellow emerging economies in addressing shared challenges and pursuing common interests. Operating within the framework of BRICS+, China actively promotes dialogue, exchanges, and joint initiatives to enhance economic cooperation, drive sustainable development, and advocate for reforms in global

governance. This cooperative approach is consistent with China's broader foreign policy objectives, which aim to position the country as a dependable and open partner on the international stage.

At the core of China's foreign policy agenda within BRICS+ lies the pursuit of a multipolar world order. By challenging existing power dynamics, China, alongside other BRICS+ nations, seeks to establish a more balanced and equitable distribution of global influence. This objective reflects China's unwavering commitment to multilateralism and its belief in the significance of collective action in tackling global issues. By advocating for a multipolar world, China aims to diminish the dominance of traditional Western powers and foster a more inclusive and diverse international system (Cheng, 2015).

Through its participation in BRICS+, China is reaffirming its role in ushering in a new world order contrary to the current one which is dominated by US influence. It has observed the fallouts of mistakes made in the regime of this world order and is trying to promote an international system that is multipolar and more inclusive of countries in the global south, of which Nigeria is a prominent part of. According to Professor Cheng, a Professor of Political Science and Chairman of the Contemporary China Research Project in the University of Hong Kong, the devastating human and material costs of the global war on terror, global financial crisis of 2008, which all emanated from the US has shown to Chinese foreign policy makers that it is imperative that a new financial and international political architecture be created in order maintain peace and promote prosperity across the globe. This is in line with rhetoric by Chinese leader Xi Jinping who talks about how global prosperity can only be achieved against a backdrop of peace. At the BRI summit in Beijing Xi said

“We should foster a new type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation; and we should forge partnerships of dialogue with no confrontation and of friendship rather than alliance. All countries should respect each other's sovereignty, dignity and territorial integrity, each other's development paths and social systems, and each other's core interests and major concerns. We should establish a stable and sustainable financial safeguard system that keeps risks under control, create new models of investment and financing, encourage greater cooperation between government and private capital and build a diversified financing system and a multi-tiered capital market "Rather, it aims to complement the development strategies of countries involved by leveraging their comparative strengths.” (China Embassy in Georgia, 2017).

The establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000 marked a significant milestone in China's engagement with Africa, representing a new chapter in their relationship. Building upon the cooperative and multipolar approach advocated within FOCAC and later on BRICS+, China expanded its involvement in Africa through increased socio-economic investment and political diplomacy. Cynthia Roberts considers that “China, Russia and the other BRICS+, seek to be among its (the international system’s) managing directors, not to overthrow it”; and she argues that “Moscow’s BRICS+ diplomacy has been one of its most successful international initiatives” (Roberts, 2010). This highlights how Chinese foreign policy is not selfish in its manner that is of no accommodation to those it claims are its international partners, despite the fact that is also self-serving in its end goal. Marshall and Merle Goldman also note that while the Chinese leadership initiated the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, it has also been careful in respecting Russia’s vital interests to avoid damaging competition within the regional organization (Goldman & Goldman, 1987).

China's diplomatic finesse has emerged prominently on the global stage, showcasing its ability to navigate complex geopolitical terrain where others have faltered. One

notable achievement is China's role in fostering dialogue between Saudi Arabia and Iran, two longstanding regional rivals (Al Jazeera, 2023). According to a paper by the Atlantic Council (Aboudouh, 2023), the US sees its relationship with China as a zero-sum game where by for one to win the other must lose. In its pursuit of global peace, development, China rejects this notion as it has stated time and time again that the world is big enough for all countries to prosper without it being at the expense of any other country (Jinping, 2023).

At a time when tensions between these nations were at a peak, China leveraged its diplomatic influence to bring representatives from both sides to the negotiating table. This success underscores China's unique position as a mediator, able to transcend historical animosities and contribute to regional stability. By employing a non-confrontational approach and emphasizing common interests, China demonstrated a capacity for diplomatic mediation that has eluded other major powers.

In contrast, the US, a key player in the Middle East, has often pursued policies that exacerbated tensions rather than promoting reconciliation. Looking at the issue of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands and all the unsuccessful attempts that have been made to achieve justice for Palestine, the US has always been present in trying to play a role of an impartial mediator and guarantor between Israel and Palestine (Pratiwi et al, 2020). But at the same time the US happens to be the number one supporter of what is beyond any shadow of doubt, the illegal and unjust occupation of Palestine (Imseis, 2020).

While China worked towards facilitating dialogue, the US has historically taken a more confrontational stance, particularly concerning Iran and even the greater Middle

East region. Instead of acting as a neutral arbiter seeking peace, the U.S. has been accused of exacerbating divisions in the region. Its approach, marked by interventions, sanctions, and a lack of diplomatic engagement, has contributed to the perpetuation of hostilities. According to Riedel of the Brookings Institute (Riedel, 2021) the US has been enabling Saudi's conflict with its neighbor Yemen and turned it into a proxy war against Iran. China's contrasting approach underscores its commitment to diplomatic solutions and its growing influence as a stabilizing force in regions marked by historical conflicts. This stark difference in diplomatic strategy raises questions about the evolving dynamics of China's global power and the impact of China's approach on international relations.

2.6 Chinese Approach to Global Governance: Bureaucratic Politics and the Era of Wolf-Warrior Diplomacy

Another aspect of Chinese foreign policy that is relevant to this research has to do with their approach to global governance. Due to the unique style of Chinese government whereby power is concentrated at the upper levels and the final decisions rest on the shoulders of the general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, it stands to reason that bulk of their foreign policy formation is directed by the leader of the country. There are however different schools of thought when it comes to understanding how foreign policy of the Chinese government works. Yu and Ridout (2021) adopted Graham Allison's bureaucratic politics model to analyze Chinese foreign policy agenda setting. This model views the state not as a unified actor with singular goals, but as a collection of competing bureaucratic interests. Imagine a chessboard, where each square houses a department or agency, vying for influence and resources to further their own agendas. Decisions, in this model, are the outcome of bargaining, negotiation, and even internal power struggles among these players, rather than simply

reflecting the rational calculations of a single leader. This lens challenges the traditional understanding of governments as monolithic entities and sheds light on the fascinating dance of internal dynamics that shapes international policy. Yu and Ridout (2021) posit that Chinese foreign policy decisions should not be seen as coming from a monolithic entity but rather as a result of bargaining done by the many different and diverse actors that have varying degrees of autonomy and capacity to intervene in the foreign policymaking process. This is important to note because it cuts through the mist created by sensationalist headlines and allows policy makers and academics alike to understand the country's decisions better. They acknowledge however that that despite the fact that foreign policy formation in China is institutionalized and professionalized, this does not undercut the standing committee of the politburo and ultimate decision-making power rests at the end of the day with the top of Beijing's leadership.

After the passing of the Chinese Paramount Leaders Mao Zedong (1949-1976) and Deng Xiaoping (1978-1989), it was thought that another paramount leader of their kind in China would not be seen again and that era had passed (Roy, 1997). This view now seems to be mistaken with the emergence of Xi Jinping (as the paramount leader of China since 2013) who has positioned himself as a leader in the same cadre as Mao and Deng. By relying on historical precedent, we see that it does not stand to reason that modern day China would embark on a neocolonial project that would seek to see that ambition realized in a country like Nigeria.

The Kingdom of Ancient China in its heyday was a somewhat benevolent dominant power that eschewed large scale extra territorial expansion and imperialistic exploitation of close and distant foreign lands as opposed to how other great powers

have behaved throughout history (e.g., Empires like Rome, Byzantine, Ottoman and Britain and French). This is not an attempt at cultural-historical determinism as the situation that ancient and modern China finds themselves are different. Increasing tensions with neighboring countries and other great powers being the key difference here. China has reacted to these increasing tensions in a variety of ways, chief among which has been dubbed by western analysts and media outlets as “wolf warrior diplomacy” (Wescott & Jiang 2020). What is important to note here with wolf warrior diplomacy is that it’s a more assertive than aggressive approach to the implementation of foreign policy objectives.

Deng Xiaoping is attributed with a saying that loosely translates in English to “Hide your strength, bide your time” (Yan, 2014). Critics pounce on this as evidence of deception within Chinese foreign policy but it is important to understand the context within which those words were uttered. It was at the end of the 1980s with the Cold War between the US and Soviet Union in the background. What he meant was more along the lines of to observe the changes in the international situation calmly and stabilize the domestic economic construction and political situation. Dealing calmly with international diplomatic affairs and not to take the place of the Soviet Union but maintain their own principles. This saying by Deng is widely recognized to be part of the guiding elements of Chinese foreign policy throughout his era (Yamazaki, 2022).

The departure from this more laid-back approach of Deng era to the wolf warrior diplomacy of Xi’s era can be seen as a result of two things. First of all, the China that Deng presided over is very much different from the one in Xi’s hands today, in terms of military, economic, and political power. This has had the effect of being able to appear more confident and assertive in its role on the international scene and then

sometimes that confidence is taken for aggression, especially since it is coming from a player who was not known to act so assertive before.

Secondly, China rise is being viewed as a threat to the national interest of some countries like the US. This perspective is rooted in a historical paradigm where certain nations, including the US, have held significant sway in shaping the political and economic landscapes of developing countries. China's rise as a major player, both economically and politically, challenges this established order.

In response to China's increasing influence, these hardliners resort to fear-mongering and claim that China is attempting to pursue neocolonial ambitions in Africa. This narrative is fueled by concerns about potential competition for resources, strategic partnerships, and geopolitical dominance. The assertive approach of China under Xi Jinping's leadership, often associated with "wolf warrior diplomacy," contributes to the perception of Chinese actions as aggressive and threatening to the interests of established powers. However, it is crucial to consider China's stated foreign policy objectives, such as fostering greater South-South economic and political cooperation, which may be overlooked in the face of reactionary fears and competition for influence in the developing world.

It is my understanding that there is a consensus in these different schools of thought and that is; although Chinese foreign policy decisions rely on many moving parts to take shape, those moving parts are guided by the hand of the President and the final say on the direction and approach to achieving those foreign policy objectives rests on his shoulders.

The increasing vigor and opened arms manner of this foreign policy approach makes African countries increasingly turn to China for various matters, including economic collaboration and diplomatic engagements. These divergent methods of approach between China and the traditional Western powers in Africa have yielded noticeable outcomes. China's engagement in Africa has been characterized by extensive economic cooperation, including infrastructure development projects, trade partnerships, and investment initiatives. This approach has been facilitated by substantial loans provided by Chinese state-backed lenders, amounting to \$160 billion between 2000 and 2020 (Hawkins & Davidson, 2023). These financial resources have played a significant role in supporting Africa's development aspirations, addressing infrastructure gaps, and fostering economic growth. Unlike the historical relationships between Africa and Western powers, which often centered on conditional aid and political influence, China's engagement has emphasized mutual benefits and win-win cooperation. This approach has resonated with many African countries, as it aligns with their desire for greater autonomy, sovereignty, and economic development.

African nations have increasingly sought partnerships with China to address pressing socio-economic challenges and leverage China's expertise in various sectors, such as infrastructure, agriculture, manufacturing, and technology. The BRI, the FOCAC, and the China-Africa Development Fund (CAD) are three important institutions that form the backbone of economic relations between Africa and China (Otunmala, 2021).

During the FOCAC conference in Beijing on September 3, 2018, President Xi Jinping of China, in his keynote address, explained five methods of Chinese engagement with Africa, while also respecting the sovereignty of African nations and refraining from involvement in their internal affairs.

- I. No interference in African countries' internal affairs
- II. No imposition of China's will on African countries
- III. No attachment of political strings to assistance to Africa
- IV. No seeking of selfish political gains in investment
- V. No seeking of selfish political gains in financing cooperation with Africa

These five Nos encapsulate Chinese non-interventionist policy with regards to its Africa foreign policy. Despite how much China has clarified its role in Africa, it still matters to measure up their word against their actions which will be the next undertaking of this thesis, with a particular focus on Nigeria.

2.7 Why Nigeria?

Kabassi (2012) posits that in order to tackle poverty and solve some of the pressing challenges to its development, a policy document titled National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) (NEEDS, 2005), the Nigerian government outlined its goals for a strategic partnership with China. This document outlines that its goal is to create and develop a homegrown business class that will be able to thrive in the world economy and the provision of FDI to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to support that business class.

Kabassi (2022), shows that there is an inconsistency between the objectives of NEEDS and the relationship between Nigeria and China, stating that it is a but a mere propaganda exercise that create an illusion for the Nigerian populace that the government is out to protect and secure the citizen's interest. Adogamhe (2010, p. 76) states that "it is a propaganda exhibit for the government of Nigeria". This might have been the case in 2012 at the time of Adogamhe and Kabassi's research but upon further

inspection of the facts that are currently on ground, we see that it is more than just a propaganda exercise as they claimed as these projects have actually yielded visible dividends.

Evidence for this can be seen in China's emphatic approach together with other countries like Russia, Brazil and South Africa to lift countries like Nigeria out of poverty through economic investments and to politically empower those countries to have a say on the global stage through initiatives like the BRICS+.

Nigeria's position as a leader in the African continents political and economic affairs makes it a prime target of Chinese interest. Historically being a part of the non-aligned movement during the Cold War, this shows it is not one to pick the side of one over the other in times of political struggle but rather be a mediating voice that seeks to stabilize the situation. According to Glosny (2010), "To date, there is little evidence that China and the BRICS+ are trying to overthrow the existing international order. Instead, China has accepted and joined the existing order, and has been working together with other powers to reform its shortcomings".

Furthermore, if we look at the data from the US Energy Information Administration in 2021, Africa contributed to 13 percent of China's crude oil import, eight percent were from Angola. Libya and Congo also each contributed to one percent and two percent of the imports, respectively. (Source: EIA, FACTS Global Energy, 2021.)

This might seem insignificant at first glance but when we take into account the fact that its consumption rate has been steadily and rapidly increasing since the turn of the century, the steady pace of its economic growth which doesn't show signs of slowing

and the fact that it doesn't have the necessary energy resources in house to support that growth, which forces it to look outward to countries like Nigeria.

Over time, China has significantly expanded its share of exports to Nigeria, reaping greater benefits from this trade relationship. In the early 2010s, the total value of trade between China and Nigeria amounted to approximately US\$7 billion. During this period, China was a major exporter to Nigeria, providing goods and services that were essential to various sectors of Nigeria's economy. Recent statistics indicate that the China-Nigeria trade volume has increased to \$7.76 billion, marking a substantial growth of 21.9% and reaching its historical peak. In contrast, Nigeria's exports to China experienced a more modest increase of 19.5%, reaching a value of only \$1.07 billion and limited to a few specific sectors. China's investments in Nigeria have also grown significantly and are estimated at \$7.9 billion, spanning across various sectors such as petroleum exploration and production, energy, free trade zones, iron and steel, manufacturing, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, telecommunications, and the food and beverage industry, among others (BusinessDay, 2011).

In as much as these numbers representing trade between China and its African partners seem lopsided in favor of China, we look to the rhetoric of the country's leaders and understand that this is not borne from a malicious or parasitic intent as some would believe.

Nigeria's Vice President Yemi Osinbajo's statements regarding China's role in Africa shed light on the perception of many African countries towards their diplomatic and political relationship with China (Onuh, 2023). Osinbajo emphasizes that China holds a crucial position as Africa's largest provider of foreign direct investment, particularly

in terms of loans and infrastructure development. He highlights the willingness of China to support African nations when the West may be hesitant to provide assistance. According to Osinbajo, African countries are unapologetic about their close ties with China, as they recognize the practical benefits of Chinese involvement in their development efforts (Osinbajo, 2023).

The language used by African leaders, including VP Osinbajo, suggests a reluctance to align with the West in condemning China. Instead, they view China as a valuable partner that is willing to offer aid and support when needed. African nations appreciate China's willingness to provide loans and invest in infrastructure, which are vital for their development aspirations. Osinbajo's remarks indicate that African leaders prioritize their countries' immediate needs and pragmatic interests, viewing China as a reliable partner that fills critical gaps left by Western counterparts.

These statements highlight the nuanced perspectives held by African leaders, indicating their contentment with the current diplomatic and political relationship with China. By prioritizing their development goals and recognizing the practical benefits of Chinese engagement, African nations are forging a path that diverges from the traditional Western narrative. The remarks made by Vice President Osinbajo reflect the sentiment of many African countries, emphasizing their willingness to work with China and their appreciation for the support provided by this strategic partnership.

This sentiment is further reinforced by the fact that despite Chinese lenders only account for 12% of Africa's external debt (ONE, 2021), (World Bank Group, 2021), and that China has provided significant debt relief to African countries during the COVID-19 pandemic (Brautigam, Acker, & Huang, 2020). It has emerged as a

significant player in providing debt relief to African countries, particularly in response to the economic challenges triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. Through initiatives such as the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI), in collaboration with other G20 nations, China has extended support to alleviate the financial burden faced by African nations (Brautigam, Acker, & Huang, 2020). According to the research by Brautigam et al (2020) no instances of "asset seizures" or enforcement of payments through courts, or the imposition of penalty interest rates, were found.

While some rescheduling has been done by Chinese lenders following Paris Club terms, Chinese lenders prefer to handle restructuring discreetly through bilateral negotiations, customizing the programs to suit each specific situation. However, the lack of transparency surrounding these processes gives rise to suspicion regarding Chinese intentions.

This lack of transparency can be easily explained by looking at standard practice for bilateral loan agreements. There is no standard model for such so countries are free to go about signing the contracts without disclosing the details they deem to be confidential. Additionally, China has demonstrated its commitment to Africa's development by engaging in further debt relief efforts during the triennial Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). Notably, this includes the cancellation of interest-free loans that were due to mature in specific years. These actions reflect China's distinctive approach to development assistance in Africa, which diverges from the perception propagated in Western media, academic circles, and policy-making circles. Rather than burdening African nations with insurmountable debt and seizing assets, as sensationalized by some sources, China's underlying logic appears to prioritize the genuine progress and prosperity of African countries. By relieving debt

and providing support during times of economic hardship, China aims to foster sustainable development in Africa, facilitating the continent's long-term growth and self-reliance. It is important to recognize the nuanced approach taken by China, which differs from the prevailing narrative often portrayed in Western discourse. By acknowledging China's focus on developmental cooperation and its efforts to alleviate Africa's financial burdens, a more comprehensive understanding of the Chinese perspective can be gained, fostering informed discussions and promoting mutually beneficial partnerships between China and African nations.

China's approach to supporting Africa's development goes beyond mere financial assistance. It is rooted in a deep understanding of Africa's historical context and a recognition of the similarities between Africa's current position and China's own journey toward development. China, having experienced the challenges and obstacles of its own development, empathizes with Africa's aspirations for progress and seeks to lend a helping hand.

Moreover, China is acutely aware that by providing substantial aid and debt relief to African nations, it cultivates a sense of goodwill and fosters positive sentiments among the people of African countries. This goodwill plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and reducing the inclination of African nations to align themselves exclusively with Western voices on contentious global issues. By demonstrating tangible support and prioritizing Africa's development, China aims to forge enduring partnerships based on mutual respect and shared interests. Data gathered and analyzed by the Pew Research Center seems to be in support of this view (Pew Research Centre, 2023). In the polls they conducted, it came to light that countries like Nigeria and Kenya stood out for their citizens' favorable view of China.

Through its actions, China aims to create a conducive environment for constructive dialogue and collaboration, ensuring that African countries have the freedom to make independent choices and shape their own destinies. By aligning its approach with Africa's aspirations and acknowledging the value of goodwill, China seeks to build a solid foundation for long-term cooperation that transcends short-term interests and advances the common goals of both China and Africa. Given this reality, it is unlikely that African countries will join the West in their criticism of China, as it is not in their national interest to do so.

The three main pillars that I identified as the basis of Chinese investment in Nigeria are:

1. Growing population which serves as a market for Chinese firms and industries
2. Huge potential for natural resources for Chinese economy
3. Deeper political ties to support it on the international stage and support for one China policy

2.8 China Foreign Policy on Taiwan Issue

Examining Chinese policy on the Taiwan issue is essential for this thesis as it adds a geopolitical dimension to the analysis. Taiwan holds a complex position in international relations, and understanding China's approach towards Taiwan provides crucial insights into its broader foreign policy objectives, potential regional tensions, and the impact on its relationships with other nations. This examination contributes to a comprehensive understanding of China's diplomatic strategies and their implications, offering a more nuanced perspective on its global engagements and their potential influence on countries like Nigeria.

The resolution 2758 by the UNGA established the Peoples Republic of China as the sole representative of the Chinese (United Nations General Assembly, 1971). The leadership of mainland China considers Taiwan to be a breakaway province which will one day be reunited with the mainland under the rule of the Communist Party of China. This is known as the One China Policy and according to Huang (2017), President Xi has invested a lot of political capital on the issue of peaceful reunification. The One China policy stands as an important part of Chinese foreign policy, representing the assertion that there is only one legitimate government of China, namely the PRC.

For decades, China has consistently pushed for international recognition of this policy, emphasizing that any diplomatic engagement or development assistance from China hinges on a commitment from nations to adhere to the One China principle. This has become particularly evident in China's dealings with various countries, where economic cooperation is often contingent upon political alignment with the PRC's position on Taiwan.

In its pursuit of global recognition for the One China policy, China employs a strategy that intertwines economic incentives with diplomatic expectations. Countries seeking development assistance, investments, or participation in initiatives like the BRI often find themselves facing the prerequisite of acknowledging the PRC as the only legitimate representative of China. This intertwining of economic cooperation with political allegiance aligns with China's vision of a unified and diplomatically cohesive global stance on the Taiwan issue.

For those countries that continue to recognize Taiwan, China has directed considerable efforts toward diplomatic outreach. Through a combination of economic incentives,

diplomatic persuasion, and cultural exchanges, China aims to sway nations toward aligning with its One China policy. This involves not only economic investments but also strategic diplomatic initiatives to isolate Taiwan on the international stage. China's engagement, in this context, becomes a delicate dance where development assistance is used as both a tool for fostering ties and as a leverage point for political concessions.

China's meticulous courting of nations still recognizing Taiwan underscores the diplomatic significance it attributes to the Taiwan issue. The competition for international recognition is not only about Taiwan's diplomatic space but also a manifestation of China's broader foreign policy objectives. By securing commitments to the One China policy, China aims not only to strengthen its diplomatic standing but also to project a unified and unwavering image on the global stage.

According to Portada et al., (2020), China has managed to win over Taiwan's former allies in Central/Latin America and gain diplomatic recognition from them as a result of promises of large-scale economic investments. However, their advance in the region is limited by the competing interests of the US, China and the central/Latin American countries themselves. This has very interesting parallels with China's engagement with African countries like Nigeria. This kind of behavior presents an interesting contrast to historical practices by Western institutions and countries that have often used development assistance as a tool for political influence.

While the West has at times employed aid as a bargaining chip, intertwining development assistance with expectations of political alignment and policy changes within the recipient countries, like how the IMF used the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) in Nigeria, China's approach takes a distinctive turn. Unlike

traditional aid practices that might involve interference in a country's internal affairs or attempts to mold its political landscape, China's focus is on the recognition of the PRC as the legitimate representative of China.

The conditionality here doesn't dictate specific internal policies or interfere with the domestic affairs of the recipient nation. Instead, it seeks diplomatic alignment on the issue of reunification, subtly tipping the scales in favor of mainland China. In essence, China's strategy links diplomatic recognition with its vision of reunification, preferring to build partnerships with nations that acknowledge the PRC. This tactic, while pragmatic in the context of its long-standing policy, distinguishes itself from historical patterns of external interference associated with development assistance.

In conclusion, historical analysis here shows that there is a reasonable amount of continuity on foreign policy objectives for the Chinese from as far back as the end of Mao Zedong's era where the first one being anti-hegemony, anti-power politics and securing the world peace; and the second one being to establish new international political and economic orders (Hsu, 1999

Chapter 3

NIGERIAN FOREIGN POLICY

Over different successive regimes, Nigeria has tried to carry out its foreign policy objectives according to its national interests (Imoukhuede, 2016), however, the country has faced many years of political instability because of the many military coups and counter coups since it gained its independence from Britain in 1960. The aim of the chapter on Nigerian foreign policy is to provide a comprehensive examination of the principles, objectives, and strategies that guide Nigeria's interactions with the international community. By delving into the historical context and key diplomatic milestones, the chapter seeks to unravel the underlying motives and considerations shaping Nigeria's foreign policy decisions. Additionally, it aims to analyze how Nigeria navigates its relationships with major global players, including China, and assess the implications of these interactions on the country's sovereignty, economic development, and regional influence.

The shaping of Nigeria's foreign policy is influenced by internal and external factors, such as the mono-cultural and oil-driven nature of the economy, geopolitical location, political leadership, military capability, population, and domestic political situation. The objectives of Nigeria's foreign policy are anchored on national interest, which is reflected in its Afro-centric approach to promote Africa's liberation from colonial rule and support African unity, international cooperation for universal peace, and promotion of a just world economic order (Imoukhuede, 2016). However, Nigeria's

foreign policy implementation exhibits imperfections due to limitations in defining national interest and addressing challenges such as security, insurgency, corruption, ethno-religious crisis, and leadership incompetence, which undermine national integration and development. According to Shodipo (2013), it is these challenges that have limited Nigeria's ability to carry out an effective foreign policy objective according to its national interest. In the context of these challenges, it raises questions whether the partnership with China on many political and economic fronts serve to help or hamper the pursuit of Nigeria's national interests.

The study of international relations is influenced by numerous actors which going into detail about all of them would over-complicate the issue. The individual, state and systemic level are the various levels which states foreign policy is analyzed in. In analyzing Nigerian foreign policy in this chapter, the state and individual level of analysis will be adopted. According to Goldstein and Pevehouse (2007) scholars uphold the state level as most important but also acknowledge that without individuals, states would merely be empty entities. This is because despite the fact that it is states who have the power to act in the international stage, those states actions are the reflections of what that particular head of state deems to be the right course of action. The character of a country's leader is reflected in the nature of its foreign policy and how it carries out diplomacy as the leader will often chooses as his top diplomats and advisors those, he thinks resonate with him and his worldview.

Undoubtedly, Nigeria may not possess the same level of global influence as countries like France, the UK, or the US in the realm of foreign affairs. However, Nigeria has adeptly harnessed its strengths in a manner that holds significant significance across the African continent. A notable instance demonstrating Nigeria's strategic impact

occurred during the political transition in The Gambia, wherein the long-standing ruler, Yahya Jammeh, refused to relinquish power to the newly elected Adama Barrow. In this critical juncture, the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) played a pivotal role within the ECOWAS Mission in The Gambia (ECOMIG) (Hartmann, 2017). This exemplar unequivocally aligns with Nigeria's foreign policy objectives as enshrined in its constitution and underscores the nation's leadership position within the region.

This part of the thesis will focus on Nigeria's foreign policy mainly since the return to democratic rule in 1999. This is because of how due to the many coups and counter coups since independence in 1960, different military heads of state have pursued their own unique style of governance and subsequently foreign policy and to unpack all of that would not be beneficial to the aims and objectives of this research thesis. Secondly, Nigeria and China have had diplomatic relations since the 1970s (Agubamah, 2014) but the last twenty years has seen some very significant increase in diplomatic relations between the two, especially since after the global financial crisis of 2008.

According to Imoukhuede (2016), Nigeria's foreign policy approach has mainly been Afrocentric in nature and Aniwofose and Enemuoh (1999) show how the objectives outlined in Section 20 of Nigeria's 1989 constitution encompass various aspects. These objectives are outlined as follows in section 19 of the constitution:

The foreign policy objectives shall be:

- a. promotion and protection of the national interest;
- b. promotion of African integration and support for African unity;

- c. promotion of international co-operation for the consolidation of universal peace and mutual respect among all nations and elimination of discrimination in all its manifestations;
- d. respect for international law and treaty obligations as well as the seeking of settlement of international disputes by negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and adjudication;
- e. promotion of a just world economic order.

(1999 Nigerian Constitution, Section 19)

Looking at these objectives and how the Nigerian state has tried (or not) to achieve them will be the focus of this chapter.

These objectives encompass a range of crucial aspects and reflect Nigeria's Afrocentric approach to foreign policy, as noted by Imoukhuede (2016). They encompass the promotion and safeguarding of national interests, the advancement of Africa's liberation from colonial rule, the support for African unity, the encouragement of international cooperation for universal peace and mutual respect among nations, and the elimination of racial discrimination. The examination of Nigeria's foreign policy objectives and its efforts to achieve them will provide the foundation for this chapter's analysis. By looking at the alignment between Nigeria's actions and its stated objectives, this study seeks to shed light on the motivations and effectiveness of Nigeria's foreign policy approach. Furthermore, a key focus will be placed on exploring the issues that intersect between Nigeria and China and evaluating whether Nigeria's relationship with China has influenced its behavior in addressing these issues. This analysis aims to assess whether Nigeria's engagement with China has resulted in a neocolonial dynamic, where Nigeria's actions are perceived as being

influenced or coerced by China, or if Nigeria has maintained its autonomy and acted on its own volition without external coercion. By considering the broader context of Nigeria's foreign policy objectives and its relationship with China, this study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the complexities and dynamics involved.

The study will draw upon primary and secondary sources, including official documents, scholarly works, and expert opinions, to provide a rigorous assessment of Nigeria's behavior and decision-making process. Through this thorough examination, the chapter aims to contribute to the scholarly discourse on Nigerian foreign policy and deepen our understanding of the interactions between Nigeria and China within the broader context of Nigeria's foreign policy objectives.

There are many different theoretical approaches to analyzing foreign policy in international relations field. The theoretical approach to this chapter is based on the individual level on analysis that focuses on the decisions and approaches made by the President and implemented through the activities of the ministries, government departments and agencies. According to Singer (1961), an observer, in any field of academic inquiry is always faced with a difficult choice of what aspect to focus on when dealing with an analysis of a system. “The observer is always confronted with a system, its sub-systems, and their respective environments, and while he may choose as his system any cluster of phenomena from the most minute organism to the universe itself, such choice cannot be merely a function of whim or caprice, habit or familiarity” (Singer, 1961).

For the purpose of this thesis, given the time frame and other limiting constraints, it is impossible to go all the various levels and sub-levels of Nigeria's foreign policy

making apparatus. Therefore, for the sake of efficiency and without compromising on quality, focus is placed on the individual level of analysis by examining the roles and impact of Nigerian presidents since the return to democracy in 1999. This targeted approach will provide a comprehensive exploration of how the unique attributes, experiences, and leadership styles of successive presidents have influenced and shaped the trajectory of Nigeria's foreign relations during distinct eras of governance.

In the landscape of scholarly discourse surrounding Nigerian foreign policy, a robust debate persists regarding the most effective theoretical frameworks for comprehending the intricacies of the nation's diplomatic engagements. Within this dynamic milieu, it is my understanding that the Levels of Analysis theory stands out as the most useful illuminating guide in the context of this thesis. It offers a multi-dimensional perspective to decipher the complex interplay of factors influencing foreign policy decisions. While international relations scholars commonly employ structural, state-centric, and individual levels of analysis, the focus on the individual level emerges as particularly pertinent for understanding Nigeria's diplomatic landscape.

Nigerian presidents, by virtue of its constitution are endowed with considerable autonomy and authority. They wield substantial influence over the formulation and execution of foreign policy. This distinctive characteristic, along with the tendency of each new leader to introduce a unique style and emphasis on specific priorities, accentuates the relevance of the individual level of analysis. In the context of Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999, the unitary nature of decision-making at the highest echelons of power further underscores the significance of examining the personal characteristics, experiences, and values of leaders in shaping the nation's foreign policy trajectory. According to Folarin (2013), the character of a leader plays a crucial role in

shaping foreign policy, highlighting the significance of the individual in power during a particular period. This underscores the importance of the individual level in analyzing Nigerian foreign policy. The rest of the analysis of Nigeria's foreign policy into 4 different eras (from 1999 to 2023) represented by the presidents who led the country at the time.

Since its return to democracy in 1999, Nigeria has had five different presidency periods, starting with Olusegun Obasanjo (1999-2007), Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (2007-2010), Goodluck Ebele Johnathan (2010-2015), Muhammadu Buhari (2015-2023) and Bola Tinubu (2023 to date). Each leader has brought a distinctive set of experiences, values, and priorities to the realm of foreign affairs, influencing the trajectory of Nigeria's international relations. Out of these 4 different eras that I analyze, particular focus is placed on the eras of Obasanjo and Buhari. This is because they both served a period of 8 years in office as civilian leaders and they both had been part of the military establishment that ruled Nigeria before a return to democracy in 1999 and they both served as Head-of-State during that period. It is important to note that before the return to democracy, Nigeria had somewhat a pariah status as a result of years of military dictatorship and a record of human rights violations by previous heads of state (Imoukhuede, 2016. p 8).

3.1 Obasanjo Era (1999-2007)

President Olusegun Obasanjo played a pivotal role in shaping Nigeria's foreign policy. As a leader with a military background and a commitment to regional stability, Obasanjo pursued diplomatic initiatives focused on conflict resolution, economic cooperation, and positioning Nigeria as a key player in African and global affairs. His personal experiences, including his role in previous military regimes, informed his

approach to governance and foreign relations. He led the country's push to sanitize its image after years of military dictatorships by carrying out a very active foreign policy that would regain Nigeria's respect in the international stage.

Among the highlights of his foreign policy that is very relevant to this thesis is the debt relief negotiations his government carried out with the Paris Club. According to Ifeoma (2011), Obasanjo's foreign policy objectives were born out of a deep desire to correct the mistakes of the past military establishment which he was a part of. He had been a military head of state from 1976 to 1979 and then been imprisoned by the regime of Gen. Sani Abacha for allegedly being part of a coup plot which he denied (Arrest of General Obasanjo, 03/17/'95, 1995; Olusegun Obasanjo | Biography, Age, & Facts).

Having gone through these experiences must have had a profound impact on Obasanjo's personality that he became more steadfast in his pro-democratic efforts and he ended up becoming the presidential candidate for the People's Democratic Party (PDP) when he had been released from jail after the death of Gen. Sani Abacha. In the eight years he spent as President, he managed to get rid of the entire debt burden on Nigeria being owed to the Paris Club and the London Club (Ifeoma, 2011). By restructuring its debt obligations, Nigeria was able to free up resources that would have otherwise been allocated to servicing these debts. This newfound fiscal space allowed the government to redirect funds towards critical sectors such as infrastructure, healthcare, education, and poverty alleviation programs.

Furthermore, the debt relief initiative demonstrated Nigeria's commitment to responsible fiscal management and garnered international recognition for the Obasanjo

administration. It showed that Nigeria was a responsible and proactive player in the international financial community, contributing to improved diplomatic relations with creditor nations and international financial institutions. In the aftermath of this, the Obasanjo administration enacted laws that would prevent careless debt acquisition, increase the efficiency of the nation's expenditure management, and last but not the least to also address the problem of corruption and embezzlement by public officials. All of these were efforts taken to protect the country's financial integrity and safeguard it from falling into another debt problem that would pose a threat to its development and its sovereignty.

Conflict management was also another key aspect of foreign policy under Obasanjo's era. According to Gbemre (2016), Bakassi peninsula is rich in crude oil and other mineral resources and was part of the ancient Kingdom of Calabar whose people are indigenous to Nigeria. The British during their colonial rule ceded the land to Germany in 1913 and then after the defeat of Germany in the first world war control of the peninsula reverted back to Britain. The Obasanjo administration signed the Greentree Agreement with Cameroon which brought an end to the clashes between the military personnel of Nigeria and Cameroon in the Bakassi peninsula. The agreement was preceded by an International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling in favor of Cameroon (Llyod, 2018). This can be seen as another example of Obasanjo's dedication to sanitize Nigeria's image on the international scene and show its international partners that it is committed to peaceful and diplomatic resolutions and regional stability, fostering a constructive relationship with neighboring nations.

The first high level diplomatic visit between Nigeria and China occurred in 1974, when Nigeria's Head of State, Gen. Yakubu Gowon visited China after providing Nigeria's

support in China's bid to reclaim its seat in the security council (Muanya, 2021). After Gowon was ousted in a coup, relations weren't further strengthened until Obasanjo became Head of State and further steps were taken to improve relations (Odeh, 2014). We can observe from this that Obasanjo had a very good relationship with his Chinese counterparts even before his civilian administration in 1999. During his tenure from 1999-2007, relations with China strengthened even more as economic ties flourished, with Chinese companies winning many infrastructures development contracts. Chinese leader Hu Jintao visited Nigeria twice, in 2004 and 2006, and addressed both houses of the National Assembly during his visit. This was an inflection point for Chinese activity in Nigerian markets. In 2006 alone, China pledged an investment of over \$3 billion across different sectors, ranging from railway, port construction, oil exploration etc.

In summary, Obasanjo's era strategically addressed challenges tied to neo-colonialism in Nigeria's foreign policy. Key achievements included successful debt relief negotiations with the Paris Club, demonstrating responsible fiscal management and improving diplomatic relations. Conflict management efforts were evident in the resolution of the Bakassi Peninsula dispute with Cameroon. The era also saw strengthened economic ties with China, challenging notions of neo-colonialism by emphasizing mutually beneficial cooperation and diplomatic engagements. So, in light of this, it defies logic and all manner of reasoning when some claim that China seeks to carry out a neocolonial project in Nigeria because on one hand Nigerian leaders have worked hard to free the country from the shackles of Western debt, successfully negotiating debt relief with entities like the Paris Club. Moreover, Nigerian leaders have played an active role in helping other nations escape the yoke of colonial

influence, contributing to regional stability and diplomatic initiatives. China, in turn, has been a key partner in supporting these efforts, fostering economic collaborations and providing an alternative to traditional Western-centric influences.

Accusations of neocolonialism by China in Nigeria then seem paradoxical, given that Nigerian leaders have actively pursued autonomy and have strategically engaged with multiple global players, including China, for mutual benefit. To entertain such claims would be to ignore the intricate diplomatic and economic dance Nigeria has masterfully conducted on the international stage, potentially undermining the very autonomy and agency Nigeria has sought to establish.

3.2 The Yar'Adua Era (2007-2010)

This marked a transition in leadership with President Umaru Yar'Adua. His tenure was characterized by a focus on domestic issues, but because of how his health challenges caused him to be absent from the helm for most of his tenure, this had negative implications for Nigeria's foreign engagements. One key takeaway in the transition from the Obasanjo era to the Yar'Adua era was how projects from the former's government were abandoned before they became completed. According to Odeh (2014, p 156), the "oil for infrastructure" program was one of those casualties of the transition but this did not weaken Chinese entry into the Nigerian markets. Yar'Adua's leadership style and emphasis on internal stability shaped the country's external relations during this period. He passed away in office due to health complications and was succeeded by his deputy Goodluck Johnathan.

3.3 The Jonathan Era (2010-2015)

This brought Goodluck Jonathan to the forefront, with a distinct approach to foreign policy. Jonathan prioritized economic diplomacy, seeking foreign investment and

partnerships to spur national development. His leadership coincided with growing security concerns, including the Boko Haram insurgency, influencing the international perception of Nigeria.

3.4 Muhammadu Buhari's Era (2015-2023)

This saw a return to leadership by a figure known for his military background and a commitment to anti-corruption efforts just like that of Obasanjo. An evaluation of Buhari's era showed that there was a lot of hopes and too high expectations for him to deliver all his campaign promises. This is evidenced from the fact some people even lost their lives as a result of recklessly celebrating his first election victory in 2015 (Duro et al. 2015). His foreign policy focused on regional security, counterterrorism, and economic diversification.

From his earlier stint as military head of state where his government had a zero-tolerance policy for corruption, a lot of Nigerians saw his second coming as a civilian president, as the cure that Nigeria was desperately in need of. This characteristic which was a major part of his domestic policy also went into his regime's foreign policy direction. As Onapajo (2019) puts it, a major part of Buhari's foreign policy was shuttle diplomacy to internationalize his anti-corruption agenda so as to recover the stolen funds kept by Nigerian politicians abroad and also to sanitize Nigeria's image on the international stage.

According to Bello et al. (2017) in their comparative analysis of Buhari's foreign policy in his two stints as the leader of Nigeria, they found that there was a huge shift in his approach to foreign policy. This can be attributed to the fact the first time he was

a military head of state and wielded a totalitarian power and in the second time he was a civilian president who had his power kept in check by the democratic system.

Another difference they point out is how in his second term he was pursued a more cordial relationship with Nigeria's neighbors and this was because of the need to for the countries to put their heads together in fighting the Boko Haram insurgency that was plaguing the region and mainly Nigeria. Indeed, the most important thing to look at when putting into context Buhari's era of foreign policy and the objectives of this thesis is the growing reports of Chinese illegal mining operations that began to take center stage in the Nigerian media landscape towards the end of Buhari's second tenure.

According to a report published by the United States Institute of Peace, (Page, 2018), there are Sino-Nigerian syndicates which are deeply involved in the illegal extraction of solid minerals across the country. The author acknowledges, however, that the influence of these Chinese owned business illegal mining operations in Nigeria is far too complex for a simplistic narrative such as "neo-colonial ambition" to explain. It is also so far impossible to prove that the illegal activities of these business entities are state sanctioned.

All in all, evidence of differing approaches during the different presidents reveals, the individual level of analysis serves as a good, the individual level of analysis thus serves as a good framework for understanding how the unique characteristics and experiences of Nigerian leaders have shaped the country's foreign policy priorities, diplomatic strategies, and responses to evolving regional and global dynamics. Examining these individual dimensions provides valuable insights into the continuity and changes in

Nigeria's approach to international relations over the past two decades. This chapter offered a detailed look into Nigeria's foreign policy approach, particularly in relation to its engagement with China. By evaluating Nigeria's actions within the framework of its stated objectives and considering the influence of its relationship with China, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis that contributes to a deeper understanding of Nigeria's foreign policy choices and their implications.

Chapter 4

DATA ANALYSIS

The aim of the data analysis chapter is to employ a multi-faceted approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods, to scrutinize the intricate dynamics of Sino-Nigerian relations. Through a content analysis of speeches by leadership figures from both Nigeria and China, the qualitative aspect aims to uncover nuanced insights into the rhetoric and diplomatic discourse. Concurrently, the quantitative analysis involves an examination of key economic indicators such as loans, trade volumes, and investment figures between China and Nigeria, providing a comprehensive understanding of the tangible aspects of their relationship. This chapter aims to contribute valuable empirical evidence to the broader examination of the evolving dynamics between these two nations.

4.1 Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative aspect of the analysis focuses on key economic indicators and metrics. This involves an examination of various factors such as:

Trade Volume: Evaluating the bilateral trade volume between China and Nigeria. This includes an examination of the types of goods and services exchanged, trade balances, and any trade policies that have a significant impact on the relationship.

Public Opinion: Exploring public perceptions of the China-Nigeria relationship through surveys or opinion polls.

These quantitative analyses will provide a solid empirical foundation for understanding the economic dimensions of the relationship and assessing whether they align with or deviate from the expected outcomes based on the qualitative analysis of the speeches and diplomatic discourse. By combining both qualitative and quantitative methods, this thesis aims to offer a holistic and nuanced understanding of China-Nigeria relations, with insights into both the rhetoric and the tangible economic aspects of the relationship. This mixed-methods approach contributes to a more comprehensive and insightful analysis of the research thesis topic.

According to Jones et al (2022), there are three seasons of Chinese foreign policy and FDI into African countries. The first one is before the global recession of 2008. This season was driven by mainly FDI for market seeking reasons and resource seeking for loans. The second season is from after the great recession, where China began to leverage its economic power in its international relationships. Economics and profit motives took a back seat here and China began to use its FDI and loans as a way to increase alignment with the receiving African countries. The third and current season began from when Xi Jinping became paramount leader of China in 2013 and this period according to the authors is when Chinese FDI began to cause reduced political alignment between African countries and the US.

From an economic theory point of view, we can assume that at the beginning the Chinese investment in Nigeria was mainly to do with resource seeking objectives but as time passed on it became clear that they are able to wield that economic power granted by their FDI to pursue the foreign policy objective of multipolarity, they pivoted and the driving force of that of that economic engagement became something else which to make countries like Nigeria more politically aligned with China.

According to Jones et al (2022, p. 14) there are three condition which must exist for an entity to gain influence over another. They are; 1) a well-resourced entity 2) an entity in need of resources 3) the absence of a watchdog. Looking at the relationship between Nigeria and China, we see that the first two exist as China and Nigeria are both well-resourced entities in the sense that China wields an immense amount of capital and Nigeria wields an immense amount of natural and human resources which China would like to tap into.

The third condition is where the problem lies as the watchdog in this context is supposed to be the Nigerian government. It is meant to safeguard its national interests concerning its relationship with China and prevent itself from becoming a vassal beholden to China due to debt. The efficacy of the Nigerian government as a watchdog becomes crucial in maintaining a balance that ensures mutual benefit without compromising national sovereignty. In navigating this complex dynamic, Nigeria must be vigilant in protecting its interests, ensuring that economic cooperation with China aligns with its development goals and does not lead to undue political influence or dependency.

A better understanding of this complex relationship requires a closer look at the perceptions of Nigerians when it how they view Chinese investments in the country. Professor Pat Utomi (Utomi, 2008), carried out a study where a wide range of stake holders (Nigerian government officials, academics, businessmen, Chinese project teams, Chinese traders and leaders, and residents of Chinese extraction who have lived and operated in Nigeria for many years) and he revealed that the consensus was that the narrative of Chinese engagement being neocolonial was just western propaganda to be dismissed and that despite the fact that the relationship is currently lopsided in a

way that benefits China more than Nigeria, there is a huge untapped potential for Nigeria to gain much more than it does from its western allies despite many years of aid.

The diagrams below illustrate the amount and category of imports and exports between Nigeria and China for the year 2021. Nigeria imported \$21.9 Billion worth of goods and exported only \$3.05 billion worth of good. The majority of Nigeria's imports being non-productive consumer goods and the majority of China's imports from Nigeria being energy products and solid minerals.

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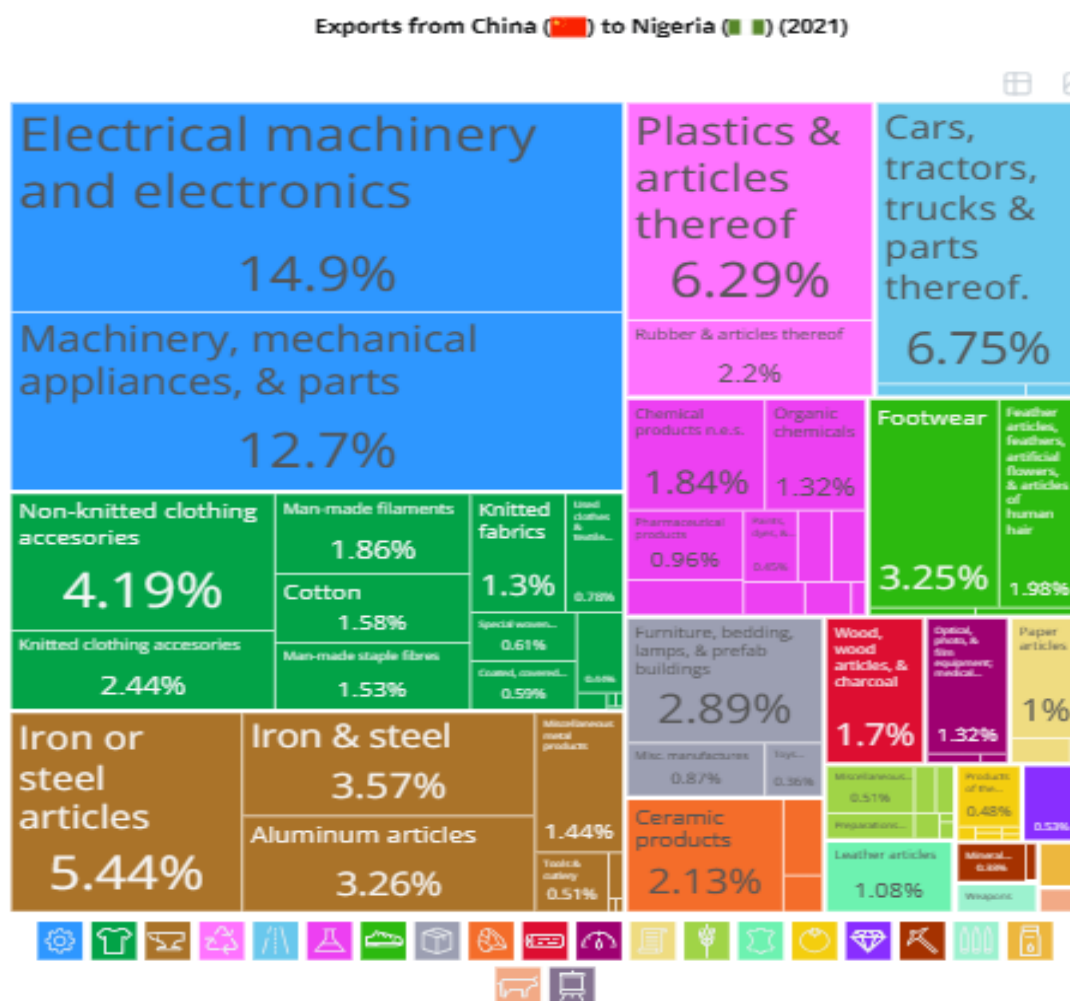


Figure 2: Exports from China to Nigeria in 2021

4.1.1 Perception of China Among Nigerians

In this section, data is used from the survey carried out by the Pew Research Center in July 2023. The survey focused on the public opinion of President Xi Jinping and the Chinese government in general, across 24 countries. In Nigeria the sample size was made up of 27,285 adults who were interviewed face to face. The results from this survey are very insightful as they show that a majority of Nigerians do not harbor mistrust or negative feelings towards China.

Table 1: Perception of China Among Nigerians

% With unfavorable view of China	% With favorable view of China
15%	80%
% Who don't see China as considerate of Nigerian interest in their policy decisions	% Who see China as considerate of Nigerian interest in their policy decisions
24%	71%
% Who sees China as non-interventionist	% Who sees China as interventionist
35%	59%
% Who see China not contributing to world peace	% Who see China contributing to world peace
29%	68%
% Who say Chinese Tech is poorly made, expensive and makes personal data unsafe	% Who say Chinese tech is well made, affordable and makes personal data safe
24.60%	70%
% Who don't have confidence for Xi Jinping to do the right thing	% Who have confidence for Xi Jinping to do the right thing
29%	62%

4.2 Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative component of the analysis involves an examination of two pivotal speeches delivered by Chinese President Xi Jinping. The first speech, a keynote address at the FOCAC summit in Beijing, illuminates China's multifaceted relationship with Africa. In this address, President Xi articulates China's strategic priorities and diplomatic goals in the African context.

The second speech, delivered at the end of the recent APEC summit in San Francisco, offers insights into China's evolving relations with the US. Notably, President Xi adopts a conciliatory tone, signaling a potential shift in the diplomatic landscape after the challenging period during the Trump years. This overture towards the US underscores China's commitment to fostering international cooperation and stability.

It is important to note however, that despite these diplomatic gestures, the US continues to exhibit an antagonistic approach towards China. This is exemplified by the restrictive measures imposed on Dutch and Taiwanese semiconductor industries, hindering their business engagements with China (Koc & Jacobs, 2024).

The attempt to isolate China from the global supply chain is a clear demonstration of the US employing diplomatic clout, political maneuvers, and economic leverage to limit China's advancement.

This dynamic raises questions about the West's accusations of China's neocolonial ambitions in Africa. The juxtaposition of these actions suggests a degree of hypocrisy, as Western nations themselves engage in similar strategies of wielding influence and hindering China's global interactions. The accusation of neocolonialism appears, in this context, as a form of deflecting attention from comparable practices by other global powers. The analysis seeks to unravel these discursive dynamics, shedding light on the complexities and nuances within China's diplomatic relations and the broader geopolitical landscape.

4.2.1 Themes from Chinese Presidents Keynote Speech at 2018 FOCAC

1. Sino-African Friendship and Cooperation:

The speech underscores the historical ties and common destiny between China and Africa, emphasizing China's commitment to being a good friend, partner, and brother to Africa. He highlights the shared experiences and mutual support that have characterized the relationship between China and Africa throughout history.

2. Principles of Cooperation:

The speech outlines China's principles in its relations with Africa, emphasizing a "five-no" approach that includes non-interference, respect, and equality in cooperation. He

reaffirms China's commitment to sincerity, real results, amity, and good faith as the guiding principles in its engagement with African nations.

3. China's Development Assistance and Economic Cooperation:

He expresses China's commitment to economic cooperation with Africa, particularly through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative. Notable commitments include investment in infrastructure projects, the establishment and upgrade of economic and trade cooperation zones, and support for African food security and agricultural modernization.

4. Global Governance and Multilateralism:

He underscores China's commitment to playing a constructive role in global governance and advocating for the representation and voice of developing countries. The speech emphasizes an open world economy, rejects protectionism, and supports the principles of multilateralism.

5. China's Vision for the Future:

He outlines China's vision for building a community with a shared future for mankind, emphasizing the promotion of the Belt and Road Initiative and common development. He expresses China's commitment to opening up, rejecting isolationism, and fostering global cooperation for mutual benefit.

6. China-Africa Cultural Exchange:

The speech promotes people-to-people exchanges, cultural events, and tourism as vital components of China-Africa relations. He announces the establishment of an institute of African studies and encourages increased cultural cooperation and educational exchanges.

7. Peace and Security Cooperation:

A significant announcement in the speech is the creation of a China-Africa peace and security fund to enhance cooperation on peacekeeping, law, and order. He expresses China's commitment to supporting security efforts in regions facing challenges and fostering a platform for security-related exchanges.

8. Environmental Protection and Green Development:

The speech highlights China's commitment to green, sustainable development, with initiatives focused on ecological and environmental protection, including climate change. Projects aimed at addressing issues such as desertification prevention, wildlife protection, and clean energy are emphasized.

9. Capacity Building and Education:

He announces initiatives to share China's development practices, support vocational training, and promote youth innovation and entrepreneurship in Africa. Measures include the establishment of Luban Workshops, vocational training centers, and support for education through scholarships and exchanges.

10. Healthcare Initiative:

The speech outlines China's commitment to upgrading medical and health aid programs, supporting healthcare infrastructure, and collaborating on disease prevention. Specific projects, such as the establishment of China-Africa Friendship Hospitals, are highlighted to underscore China's dedication to healthcare cooperation.

11. Trade Facilitation and Economic Cooperation:

He expresses support for increased imports from Africa and initiatives to facilitate trade, market regulation, and cultural exchanges. The speech underscores China's commitment to strengthening economic ties and cultural cooperation between China and African nations.

12. Financial Assistance to Africa:

A significant commitment is made in the form of a substantial financial package to Africa, including grants, loans, and special funds. He encourages Chinese companies to invest in Africa, emphasizing a multi-faceted approach to financial support.

13. Focus on Youth:

The importance of young people in shaping the future of China-Africa relations is recognized, with specific measures outlined to provide training and job opportunities for young Africans. He envisions a role for the youth in promoting China-Africa cooperation and South-South cooperation.

14. Myth of Chinese Neocolonialism:

An implicit refutation of the neocolonialism narrative is evident through emphasis on mutual respect, win-win cooperation, and non-interference in African countries' internal affairs. He also stresses China's commitment to being a good friend and partner, dispelling notions of pursuing selfish political gains in its engagement with African nations.

4.2.2 Themes from Chinese Presidents Speech at the End of the APEC Summit

Preamble

It is important to note that while these themes provide insights into China's foreign policy approach, there is no direct mention of Chinese neo-colonial ambitions in Africa or Nigeria. This is because the official Chinese response to the allegations of neo-colonial ambitions is that they firmly reject it. Given the official stance of the Chinese government, firmly rejecting allegations of neo-colonial ambitions, it is understandable that Xi Jinping does not explicitly address this issue in his speech. The absence of any mention of neo-colonialism is likely intentional, reflecting the Chinese leadership's dismissal of such accusations. The context of the speech, taking place at a

summit of Asia-Pacific leaders, may have influenced the content to focus on broader themes of cooperation, mutual respect, and global partnership. Xi Jinping's speech signals a notable shift in tone regarding China-US relations. While emphasizing historical ties and achievements, the speech underscores the importance of building a better world through cooperation and peaceful coexistence. This change in tone reflects an effort to recalibrate China's image on the global stage, moving away from a perceived adversarial stance towards a more cooperative and mutually beneficial approach. The emphasis on people-to-people exchanges, economic cooperation, and shared global initiatives suggests a desire for positive engagement and collaboration with the international community. In my thesis, I leverage the themes extracted from this tone-changing speech to extrapolate how China views its relationship with the rest of the world and African countries like Nigeria. By examining the emphasis on mutual respect, win-win cooperation, and commitment to peaceful development, I aim to analyze China's evolving foreign policy objectives and its vision for global engagement. While the speech does not directly address neo-colonial allegations, its overarching themes provide valuable insights into China's approach to international relations and cooperation, forming a basis for further analysis and understanding of China's evolving role in the world.

Themes

1. Historical Ties and Friendship:

Xi Jinping highlights the historical ties and friendship between China and the US, emphasizing shared experiences during World War II and historical achievements like the establishment of the United Nations.

2. Economic and People-to-People Exchanges:

The speech underscores the significant economic ties between China and the US, citing trade figures, investment, sister city relationships, and the importance of people-to-people exchanges.

3. Building a Better World:

Reference is made to China and the US jointly founding the United Nations after World War II, emphasizing their collective role in establishing the postwar international order and contributing to global peace, development, and progress.

4. People's Diplomacy:

The speech repeatedly highlights the role of people-to-people interactions, emphasizing the importance of subnational level exchanges and the need to build bridges between societies.

5. Mutual Respect and Peaceful Coexistence:

Xi Jinping emphasizes the importance of mutual respect between China and the US, respecting each other's unique histories and development paths. Peaceful coexistence is stressed as a fundamental norm for international relations.

6. Win-Win Cooperation:

The concept of win-win cooperation is central to the speech, with Xi Jinping stating that China is ready to be a partner and friend of the US. He emphasizes that China's development path aligns with its own historical and cultural context.

7. Global Initiatives:

China's global initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative, Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative, and Global Civilization Initiative are mentioned as open to all countries, including the US.

8. Sustainable Development and Environmental Responsibility:

Xi Jinping outlines China's commitment to sustainable development, pledging to peak carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060. He emphasizes China's contributions to global environmental goals.

9. Commitment to Peaceful Development:

Repeated assurances are given that China is committed to peaceful development, opposing war, colonization, plundering, or coercion. China's commitment to safeguarding the current international order and adhering to international law is emphasized.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

The climax of this research journey has provided valuable insights into the intricacies of Chinese and Nigerian foreign policies. This thesis offers a nuanced understanding of their interactions and the implications. This is not just for Nigeria and China alone but for other countries in the global South who are trying to develop their economies and navigate their international relations against the backdrop of a world increasingly becoming strained by geopolitical tensions and economic complexities.

The findings show that it is important for nations in the global south to strike a balance as they seek economic development while avoiding unwelcome external influence. In a world characterized by shifting power dynamics, rising protectionism, and regional challenges, the experiences of Nigeria and China serve as a valuable guide for policymakers and scholars alike. As these countries grapple with the intricacies of diplomacy, trade, and development, their stories resonate as cautionary tales and sources of inspiration for those navigating the complex terrain of international relations. I hope that this research not only enriches the comprehension of the reader when it comes to Chinese-Nigerian interactions but also contributes to a broader conversation on the evolving landscape of global governance, offering insights that may shape future diplomatic strategies and policy decisions for nations seeking to assert their agency on the world stage. In this chapter I summarize the key findings, discuss their implications, and reflect on the broader contributions of this study.

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

From a historical perspective, China strategically wields diplomatic influence globally, particularly evident in deftly managing tensions in Africa amid US antagonism. This strategic diplomacy is exemplified by China's effective alliances within Africa, influencing votes at the UNHRC. In the current fragile international system, China stands out as a key player, adeptly securing national interests through diplomatic finesse. The deconstruction of the 'Debt Trap' narrative reveals nuanced conditions in China's economic engagement with Africa. The case studies, challenge simplistic characterizations, and in emphasizing contextual understanding of Chinese economic activities, the facts show that there is not enough evidence even in the most likely cases, to say that China harbors neocolonial ambitions towards countries of the global south which are financially indebted to it. China's unique diplomatic approach diverges from the US, notably in engaging with the developing world. The new era of Wolf-Warrior Diplomacy signifies China's assertiveness in global affairs, departing from traditional norms and this shift is partly responsible for why western observes mistake China's assertion for aggression. Nigeria holds strategic importance in China's foreign policy, extending beyond economic ties to include diplomatic considerations. This is evidenced in the how China has supported Nigeria's bid for a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council (Adeniji, 2005). China's careful approach to the Taiwan reunification issue showcases strategic diplomatic balancing in the sense that though they purse a policy of reunification which could be made possible by the use of force, they rather engage in a more subtle and coercive approaches like diplomatic isolation to try lure the breakaway region back into the fold.

The perception of China among Nigerians was quite telling in the sense that majority of the sample size surveyed did not view China as a threat and in fact saw it in a positive light. Combined with the qualitative analysis of the themes in the speeches of Chinese President being about win-win cooperation and a commitment to peaceful global development, it is not hard to see why many Nigerians have such a positive view of China and its leadership despite what Western commentary would have them believe. The part of the quantitative analysis which focused trade volumes between Nigeria and China told a different story however. As the sectors which dominate Chinese imports from Nigeria happened to be made of productive goods like energy commodities. This falls in line with the assumption of why China is investing in Nigeria but then it stands to reason that not enough is being done to share the sweeter fruits of the Chinese economy with Nigeria as the majority of Nigerian imports from China are non-productive consumer goods.

5.2 Limitations and Further Research

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study so that future research will not carry the same issues. A big challenge to this thesis was the constraint imposed by time. The unfulfilled desire to augment the analysis with primary data through fieldwork, interviews with officials from both China and Nigeria, and an investigation into less-explored aspects like illegal mining operations was also another issue. The lack of primary data from key stakeholders potentially limits the depth of insights into certain dimensions of the relationship. Future research endeavors should prioritize allocating sufficient time for comprehensive fieldwork to capture the subtleties of diplomatic interactions.

Another challenge arose from the dynamic nature of political landscapes that affect both China and Nigeria. The thesis was completed amid significant political transitions, including a new government in Nigeria and the upcoming elections in the US. These changes have the potential to alter foreign policy stances and international relations dynamics. The findings of this study, therefore, should be considered in light of the evolving political context, recognizing that shifts in leadership may impact the validity and applicability of the results.

Last but not the least, the global geopolitical environment is inherently unpredictable, with factors such as elections, policy changes, or unforeseen events playing significant roles. As of the completion of this thesis, the impending U.S. elections and the potential return of Donald Trump introduce an element of uncertainty. The outcomes of these geopolitical events may influence the trajectories of Chinese and Nigerian foreign policies, rendering certain aspects of the analysis subject to change. In acknowledging these limitations, it is crucial to approach the findings of this study with a degree of caution, recognizing that the ever-evolving nature of international relations necessitates ongoing scrutiny and adaptation.

5.3 Final Thoughts

Ever since the end of the colonial era, the leadership of countries like Nigeria and many others in the global South have tried to develop their economies and provide for themselves a standard of living that will be able to make their citizens stand shoulder to shoulder with others from the developed world. How these countries have fared in this regard is subject to a lot of debate. One thing that is undeniable however, is that one of the biggest stumbling blocks for many African countries on their path since independence is the interference in their domestic affairs by external state and non-

state actors. Economic interests continue to drive the engine of Nigeria's relationship with the west and also with China. However, the shifting plates of the geopolitical landscape makes it important for a country like Nigeria to reassess its position. In doing so, it is most important for a country like Nigeria to reassess its position with critical awareness and agency, not solely relying on narratives dictated by external forces.

Here, the words of Gayatri Spivak (Spivak, 1988) resonate deeply: "Can the subaltern speak?" In this context, the subaltern isn't just the colonized but also the silenced voice of nations like Nigeria, whose agency and perspectives are often drowned out by the loud pronouncements of the West. The discourse of "neocolonialism" surrounding China-Africa relations often originates from the very actors who held the reins of colonialism for centuries. Their pronouncements, while claiming to champion African interests, risk becoming self-serving tools to maintain power dynamics and influence. It is therefore of the utmost importance to decolonize our gaze and engage in a critical examination of these narratives, separating genuine concerns from veiled attempts to maintain dominance.

The analysis of the facts, as presented in this thesis, reveals a different reality – a mutually beneficial relationship built on respect and shared interests with China. This finding doesn't negate the need for vigilance and responsible engagement, but it challenges the simplistic "neocolonial" narrative and empowers Nigeria to chart its own course in the global stage. By prioritizing self-reflection, open dialogue with all partners, and a focus on internal development, Nigeria can break free from the shackles of imposed narratives and forge its own path towards a brighter future. This journey

demands a conscious effort to amplify our own voices and ensure that, as Spivak urges, the subaltern can not only speak, but be heard and understood on its own terms.

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