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The Nature of Sino-Nigerian Relations: Strategic Economic Cooperation or Neo-colonialist Exploitation?

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The Nature of Sino-Nigerian Relations

Strategic Economic Cooperation or Neo-colonialist Exploitation?

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1. Introduction

The rising Chinese presence and the consequential diminishing of Western influence in Africa has received increasing attention to those following developments in international relations. Between 1992 and 2009, the percentage of total trade of African countries with China increased from 2% to 14% (Gokcekus and Yui 2016. 1). By 2021, the proportion of total trade of African nations with China reached 22%. (Statista 2023) On the other hand, over the period between 1992 and 2009, the share of foreign trade with Africa held by the West decreased significantly as trade between the OECD nations and Africa lowered from 82% to 61% (Gokcekus and Yui 2016. 1). The percentage held by the European Union and the United States has steadily been diminished over time lowering from 31.8% in 2019 to 27% in 2021 (Statista 2023)

The Chinese presence in Africa however extends beyond the mere economical and can additionally be seen in interstate political diplomacy. At the start of the twenty-first century, China and the African continent devised the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), which would quickly operate as the platform through which multilateral exchange and cooperation between China and African countries could occur (Lechini et al 2020, 345). The importance of FOCAC was reinforced by increased interpersonal contact of national diplomats and heads of government in state visits (Lechini et al 2020, 345). In 2013, contact between China and the African continent saw one more significant surge when Chinese president Xi Jinping launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Xi claimed interconnectivity to be a guiding principle for countries participating in the BRI and subsequently the Chinese relations with several African countries were intensified to the category of ‘comprehensive strategic partnership’ (Lechini et al 2020, 345).

Nevertheless, this rise in Sino-African cooperation has not gone unnoticed by other powers. According to some authors and national leaders alike, the increase in Sino-African cooperations could signal the heyday of neo-colonial expansion of China, starting in Africa. US secretary Hillary Clinton accused China of engaging in ‘new colonialism’ in Africa during her visit to Zambia in 2011 (Zhao 2014, 1033). A year later during a FOCAC summit, former South African President Jacob Zuma warned the state officials present that ‘Africa’s past economic experience with Europe dictates a need to be cautious when entering into partnerships with other economies’, alluding to the colonial past of many African nations (Zhao 2014, 1033). The Chinese government however argues that its increased interest in African relations indicates South-South cooperation and underlines the existence of mutual benefit (Zhao 2014, 1033). This statement is agreed upon by many African leaders and economists.

One Zambian economist states that in order to ‘satisfy China’s population and prevent a crisis of legitimacy for their rule, leaders in Beijing need to keep economic growth rates high and continue to bring hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. And to do so, China needs arable land, oil and minerals. Pursuing imperial or colonial ambitions with masses of impoverished people at home would be wholly irrational’ (Zhao 2014, 1034).

As of 2021, Nigeria is the largest economy in Africa as well as the 27th largest economy in the world (Lu 2023, 1). Nigeria has been amongst the top product-exporting partners to China on the African continent, only bested by Angola and South Africa (Lechini et al 2020, 345). In contrast to many other African nations, China and Nigeria have held consistently friendly relations for over 50 years (Jianchun 2023, 1). Jianchun, Ambassador of China to Nigeria, stated that he believes Sino-Nigerian cooperation to be the ‘epitome of Africa-China relations.’ This view is not controversial in Nigerian politics as former Nigerian president Obasanjo stated in 2006 that ‘this is the century for China to lead the world. And when you are leading the world, we want to be very close behind you’ (Zhao 2014, 1038). Nigeria accounts for nearly 50 percent of West-Africa’s population, being home to a domestic market of over 200 million consumers (Pay et al 2020, 248). In addition, Nigeria is home to an array of natural resources, most notably including petroleum.

Nigeria is undeniably a crucial power in the African international political economy and its strong relations with China, which has been accused of colonial relations with African nations, requires a more in-depth study. Therefore, this thesis will attempt to answer the following question: *What aspects of neo-colonialism can be found in Chinese political, economic and societal relations with Nigeria when analysed through a historical comparative lens?*

In order to answer this question, this thesis will provide an overview of academic literature discussing the origin and political nature of Sino-African relations in the following chapter. In the third chapter, the theories of both colonialism and neo-colonialism and their shared features will be analysed. In the fourth chapter, the methodology employed will be presented. The fifth chapter examines the Nigerian colonial history and subsequent establishing of neo-colonial relations with the United Kingdom. The sixth chapter studies the nature of Sino-Nigerian relations in contrast to the previous chapters. The fifth and sixth chapters will be divided into subheadings discussing political, economic and social aspects of the Nigerian relationships with the British and Chinese respectively and be compared and contrasted at the end of each subchapter in chapter six. Lastly, the seventh chapter will provide a final discussion and conclusion.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Sino-African Relations over Time

In recent years, the current nature of Sino-African relations and claims of neo-colonialism have been increasingly discussed in academics, as China has been expanding beyond just economic influence across the globe and as the African continent holds the most turbulent history of exploitation and colonisation. In order to provide a clearer analysis of the academic research surrounding Sino-African relations, this chapter will unveil three aspects of its nature as argued for by the authors discussed: Sino-African relations over time, forms of neo-colonialism in Sino-African relations, and lastly whether South-South cooperation can be categorised as neo-colonial.

While the earliest signs of Sino-African relations date back to 202 BC, the Bandung Conference in 1955 is often considered to be the starting point of modern Sino-African relations. (Snow 1988, 357) Nonetheless, since 1955, the cooperation has evolved significantly. Several authors divide the history of Sino-African relations into three distinct periods. Authors Addis and Zhu mark the first phase as lasting between the Bandung conference of 1955 and the early 1970s, which laid the emphasis on a shared struggle for independence, a call for increased political and economic cooperation and a strong diplomatic foundation of countering all forms of colonialism. Author Zhao adds that in return for the Chinese support in the emancipation of African nations and the independence from the West, African nations played a decisive role in the United Nations' (UN) recognition of the PRC in 1971, marking the end of the first period.

The second phase, according to Addis and Zhu, which lasted between the late 1970s and the early 1990s, saw the first pragmatic results of economic cooperation. The new chairman of the Communist Party of China (CCP), Deng Xiaoping introduced his economic reforms in the late 1970s which would see increased Chinese-led international economic activity. Therefore, the first Sino-African infrastructure projects such as the Tanzania–Zambia Railway and the Benin Friendship Stadium would be established during the mentioned period.

However, Zhao claims the second phase, which started throughout the 80s, to be a 'decade of neglect' regarding Africa in China's foreign policy. With the change to a market oriented economy under Deng, China was more interested in trade and investment going and coming from the West. Zhao claims that it was only following the Tiananmen Square crackdown in 1989 and the subsequent reaction of the West that China turned its interest to African nations. In order to sustain its fast economic growth during the late 1990s, China adopted a near neo-mercantilist approach to the search for readily available and affordable natural resource supplies which remained largely unclaimed on African territories. Zhao states that China 'rediscovered' Africa during the end of this period.

The third phase, according to Addis and Zhu, which started in the late 1990s until modern day relations revolves around accelerating the strengthening of Sino-African relations, primarily on an economic front. At the start of the 21st century, China and Africa adopted the Program for

China-Africa Cooperation in Economic and Social Development at a ministerial conference which can be identified as the predecessor of FOCAC. Most often under the name of FOCAC, China has provided favourable loans, infrastructure investments and training in construction and the arrangement of human resources to African nations. In return, African nations politically supported China in the international arena when accused of human rights abuses or calls for Taiwanese independence.

Zhao adds that the rekindled Chinese interest in strengthening Sino-African economic relations was sparked by an established comparative advantage over Western powers. China offers cheaper means of production and grants loans and investments, free of the constraints that Western nations require to be in place. In addition, the Chinese presence in Africa does not carry the same historical weight as its Western counterpart. As China does not have a history of slavery, colonisation or deploying military forces in Africa, African regimes are more prone to welcome China as a traditional ally, invoking the memory of a closer lying position in history as subjects of foreign oppression. Lastly, since 1990, China has managed to lift hundreds of millions of citizens out of poverty, displaying an alternative developmental model built around a strong central leadership. The Chinese model with its focus on economic growth can therefore be seen by many African leaders as an attractive alternative.

The authors Zhao, Addis and Zhu show that Sino-African relations were initially built around a shared stance against colonialism. A period of reduced activity would follow leading to the period between the 1990s and modern day which has seen a greatly increased interest in Sino-African relations from both sides. Zhao attempts to explain this mutual interest from an economic perspective, comparing it to Western alternatives. However, Sino-African economic relations span further than solely being an alternative to the West.

2.2 Forms of Neo-colonialism in Sino-African relations

In the 2010s, several significant political leaders warned the African continent of China following a colonialist path to African resources through exploitation (Zhao. 2014. 1033). Zhao identifies that in return for natural resource extraction, China often exports many cheaply manufactured commodities to the continent. According to Nkrumah, natural resource extraction followed by selling the finished products utilising the extracted resources back to the place of origin is a form of neo-colonialism. Zhao states that the cheaply manufactured Chinese products often stunt the growth of young local companies which ends up monopolising the national markets, harming fair competition. Additionally, the big volume of exported Chinese goods to African nations has led to a significant trade imbalance. However, authors Agbebi and Virtanen identify that China has been shown to address this trade imbalance and has attempted to balance it out. Several African nations, most particularly the least developed nations have been granted 'zero customs duty' status on Chinese imports. Additionally, African finished goods exported to China have been gradually increasing.

Lastly, China has funded several special economic zones across the African continent supporting export diversification and promoting industrial activity. Agbebi and Virtanen believe that China could be a catalyst for the promotion of industrial activity in select African nations which would narrow the trade imbalance over time. Nevertheless, a trade imbalance and a form of economic dumping can be found in Sino-African relations regardless of minor yet notable attempts from China to bridge the gap.

A second common critique from Western commentators and subsequently discussed in the academic research surrounding the nature of Sino-African relations describes the surge in Chinese investments as the formation of a debt-trap. Author Vines explains this criticism as a deliberate strategy to loan unmanageable sums to African countries, drawing them into the Chinese sphere of influence ending in the committing of unfair forms of repayment upon them. However, Vines illustrates that while several African nations such as Kenya or Zambia manage their national debts poorly, this is not only towards China but also towards its other creditors. Amsalu and Zhu even build on the contrary of this argument, pointing out that China has been providing debt relief to several African countries, in contrast to Western counterparts. Additionally, Singh points out that China has not shown any signs of predatory behaviour towards strategic assets. Vines concludes that while a Chinese strategic use of debt might be shown in the future and should therefore not be fully dismissed, the Chinese lead projects in Africa which facilitate debt are largely uncoordinated and unplanned, showing no initial governmental intent of debt-trap diplomacy.

A third criticism of Sino-African relations claims that China is fostering dependency on the Chinese economy in African nations. Author Mason identifies two different types of dependency created in Africa. The first kind analysed by Mason is self-imposed dependency. This occurs when a state heavily counters the West, largely based on accusations of neo-colonialism. This can be seen in Zimbabwe during the 80s and 90s. Following Western sanctions in response to the failed land reforms in Zimbabwe, China became an increasingly important economic ally to the nation. Zimbabwe failed to balance China against the West and in the process lost its autonomy, according to Mason. The second kind of dependency can be seen in states, such as South Africa, which have important economic relations with China which plays a significant role in the national economy but have other foreign relations to balance, granting a greater amount of autonomy. Mason shows that in certain nations dependency on China is indeed present, it does not seem applicable in a broader analysis of the nature of Sino-African relations.

A fourth criticism discussed by Zhao claims that through the '*laissez faire*' mentality behind the no-strings-attached Chinese loans, China facilitates corruption in national governments or in certain cases even imports it. The criticism claims that this would in turn allow China to dominate the less stable state over time, both economically and politically. Singh however in contrast claims that the non-interventionist approach of Chinese lending grants the receiving state a greater amount of national agency allowing it to focus on eradicating national corruption and steering away from any potential foreign debt-traps or engaging in unequal treaties.

2.3 Sino-African Engagement as Inherently Anti-Colonial

The final broader aspect of the nature of Sino-African relations discussed by authors is whether Chinese foreign relations can ever be classified as neo-colonialist. Several authors have argued that Chinese relations can not be identified as neo-colonial due to a multitude of reasons. Agbebi and Virtanen identify the root of inequality and subsequent neo-colonial relations to stem from colonialism and imperialism between the Global North and South. As China and African nations forged their initial relations around a shared historical position at the Bandung conference of 1955, Beijing's relations will remain anti-imperialist and anti colonialist. Zhong and Uzoigwe expand on this concept, stating that the military defeats and subsequent exploitation that China suffered at the hands of the West in the 1800s during the Chinese century of humiliation created an intergenerational trauma which made China anticolonial in character. Amin claims that Chinese investments focussing on the industrialisation of African nations as part of South-South Cooperation can not be identified as neo-colonial as the two powers involved are developing and partake in mutually beneficial relations. Amsalu, Zhu and Zhong identify claims of Chinese neo-colonial relations in Africa as mere Sino-phobia spread by the West. Zhong elaborates that Eurocentrism remains at play stemming from the embedded feeling of Western superiority as seen in a Saidesque manner.

The academic research surrounding the nature of Sino-African relations argues that claims of Chinese neo-colonial aggression can rarely, if ever, be identified. When neo-colonialist aspects can be identified in Sino-African relations, this ordinarily follows a unique national example rather than being an inherent aspect of broader relations between China and the African continent. Authors show that Sino-African relations were founded on a mutual stance regarding anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism in 1955, developing into complex contemporary relations. While patterns of an unequal trade balance or cases of dependency can be identified in Sino-African relations, other claims such as organised debt-trap diplomacy or a relation solely revolving around the extraction of natural resources are swiftly debunked. Additionally, some authors have claimed that China can not engage in neo colonial relations due to its own history. Nonetheless, the research shows that Sino-African relations are diverse and do not follow a one-size-fits-all model. They often need to be analysed closer in a regional or national case study in order to draw any further conclusions. To this end, this thesis will provide a case study focused specifically on Sino-Nigerian relations.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Neo-colonialism

As shown in the previous chapter, the nature of Sino-African relations often gets labelled as neo-colonialist. As the term neo-colonialism is a relatively new addition to the lexicon of international relations, this chapter will attempt to define the theory as well as its similarities and differences when compared to 'traditional' colonialism.

The theory of neo-colonialism was first introduced in the 1950s by Ghana's Foreign Minister, Alex Quaison-Sackey, at the UN General Assembly. He described the term neo-colonialism as "the practice of granting a sort of independence with the concealed intention of making the liberated country a clientstate, and controlling it effectively by means other than political ones (Uzoigwe 2019, 60).

Kwame Nkrumah, who led the government that former Ghanaian Foreign Minister Quaison-Sackey served in, built on the previously mentioned definition of neo-colonialism. In 1965, Nkrumah's book titled *Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* was published which to this day is used as the bedrock of neo-colonialist studies. For Nkrumah, neo-colonialism is the natural progression following a period of traditional colonialism, in which the colonial powers hold great levels of influence in newly independent nations. Nkrumah summarises the term as follows:

The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside.

The way in which this foreign economic control is exercised does not occur in the same format each time. An example provided by Nkrumah states that former colonising powers pressure newly independent nations to purchase its nationally manufactured products. This pressure is exerted by excluding potential alternative sources of trade, a neo-colonial power could bribe and control civil servants in order to remain politically viable or remain economically in control by retaining foreign exchange regulation by imposing a centrally controlled banking system. Financial aid from former colonising powers is part of this structure of exploitation according to Nkrumah. He states:

'Aid', therefore, to a neo-colonial State is merely a revolving credit, paid by the neo-colonial master, passing through the neo-colonial State and returning to the neo-colonial master in the form of increased profits.

Nkrumah argues that neo-colonialism, not unlike traditional colonialism, is an export of domestic social issues from the colonialist power to its foreign territory. Through the structure of a welfare state, colonial powers were able to provide increased economic benefits to the different classes of their society by creating a foreign class under the lowest ranking layer domestically which reduces national civil unrest. However, towards the end of colonial empires, engaging in colonialism itself became controversial for governments in the eyes of its citizens. Therefore creating a neo-colonial relation with former colonies became highly appealing to former colonising powers. Neo-colonialism provides economic benefits to all layers of society while lacking the official status of a colonising power which allows neo-colonialist powers to reap all benefits of colonialism without the accompanying scrutiny. This aspect adds to the harmful status of neo-colonialism according to Nkrumah who states:

Neo-colonialism is also the worst form of imperialism. For those who practise it, it means power without responsibility and for those who suffer from it, it means exploitation without redress.

An important final point is that according to Nkrumah, neo-colonialism is not exclusively between the newly independent nation and the initial colonisers of the area. He illustrates this point through the example of South Vietnam which had previously been a colony of France, yet came under an American neo-colonialist influence in the years of its civil war. Additionally, Nkrumah clarifies that he does believe neo-colonialism to be a final step following colonialism. Neo-colonialism will not be at play in any nation, if said nation was not colonised prior (Nkrumah, 1965, Introduction).

After gaining increasing international traction in the Global South in the 1960s and 1970s, Western politicians and academics quickly rejected the phenomenon, claiming it to be an inaccurate representation of its relations (Uzoigwe 2019, 60). Former British Foreign Secretary Alec Douglas-Home claimed at the UN General Assembly 1963 that the phenomenon of neo-colonialism was “at best a synthetic grievance, and at worst ... deadly dangerous because it encourages poverty and racialism. ... I hope that we shall hear less of neo-colonialism.”, finishing by stating that the term will not gain a spot in the British political dictionary as the British people can simply not define the term (Uzoigwe 2019, 60). The lack of Western political acknowledgment hindered the academic development of neo-colonial theory for a significant time, cementing the definition of Nkrumah. However, over the last few decades the theory has evolved nonetheless and Nkrumah’s definition has been criticised.

Author Uzoigwe states that while Nkrumah laid the foundation of neo-colonial theory, *Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* merely explains the neo-colonialism of Nkrumah’s day (Uzoigwe 2019, 63). Uzoigwe defines neo-colonialism as follows:

... what is broadly called neo-colonialism is the nature of relations after independence between European powers and their former colonies of the nonEuropean world.

Uzoigwe continues by clarifying that according to his definition, other powers like China, India or Brazil can not engage in neo-colonial relations as they are inherently based on European power imbalances. Nguyen et al. expand on this idea of embedded Western-centric neo-colonialism, claiming that multilateral institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are international vessels of exerting power over former colonised nations. In order to receive loans or economic aid from these international institutions, developing nations in the Global South are required to compromise certain aspects of their national development projects. In this manner, these institutions originating in the Global North, impose a Western model of development on debt-receiving countries keeping a level of influence over the political systems of former colonies.

Mignolo takes this idea of embedded Western neo-colonialism further by linking it to the general notion of modernity. Mignolo states:

Supported the struggle for decolonisation in Africa and Asia and started an economic global project under the name of 'development and modernisation'. We know today the consequences of salvation by development (Mignolo 2011, 43).

He hereby combines and expands upon aforementioned elements of neo-colonialism as used by Nkrumah and Nguyen et al. regarding aid to former colonies and the Western-bias surrounding international institutional politics respectively. Mignolo continues by explaining that the Global South has adopted a 'consumer' role in relation to scholarships and knowledge originating in the North. Throughout history, the design of modernity and modern knowledge have been linked to the West and attempts of producing knowledge in developing nations have been deemed futile. Chatterjee summarises this notion, stating: "We have tried, for over a hundred years, to take our eyes away from this chimaera of universal modernity and clear up a space where we might become the creators of our own modernity" (Mignolo 2011, 45).

Nguyen et al. show how neo-colonialism still plays an active role in the education of later developing nations across the Asian continents, negating indigenous educational patterns. The analysis of Nguyen et al. show that Western educational theories and points of view are often unquestionably adopted. As education is often seen as the first step in human development, this Western view spills over into other factors of local cultures. Additionally, Nguyen et al. disclose that the image of Western educational supremacy is entrenched in all layers of the educational system. Nguyen et al. give the example of Singapore's university leaders attempting to refashion their two

biggest universities as the future ‘Harvard and MIT of the East’, solidifying their current position in the shadow of the West (Nguyen et al. 2009, 109-130).

A final societal byproduct of neo-colonialism is illustrated by author Keese. Keese shows in his article from 2019, how the discourse surrounding neo-colonialism influences the trust in governance in a newly independent society. He shows this through a case study of the initial political system of Dahomey, rudimentary summarised as the predecessor of modern day Benin, which gained independence in 1958 from France. All much needed attempts at development projects or modernisation of the regional agriculture sector proposed by the new government were met with increased discussion and resistance from society, who saw the government as a puppet of ‘grassroots neo-colonialism’. The extent to which this fear was justified becomes futile as a newly independent nation needs to initiate development projects (Keese 2019, 261).

3.2. Colonialism

Neo-colonialism as stated prior, is usually considered to be a continuation of colonialism. The UN General Assembly alludes to the components of colonialism in its *saltwater thesis*, adopted in 1960. The thesis states that colonisation occurs when indigenous populations which consist of nations and peoples alike, *are subject to an economic and/or political and/or social domination which is alien and colonial*, lacking self-determination. In order to decolonise, the thesis states a selection of rights should be granted to indigenous populations, including full control over national *economies, development in conformity with their tradition and customs, freedom in foreign relations and trade, educating their children in relation to their cultures, languages, traditions and way of life and finally, the right to the ownership of land*. Finally, the *saltwater thesis* clarifies that a large body of water is what signifies coloniality. Erueti rightfully points out that this definition excludes indigenous inhabitants of Australia or the Americas from this definition of colonialism (Erueti 2020, 15-16).

The broader aspects of colonialism defined in the *saltwater thesis* are closely repeated by most other authors. Horvath summarises the definition as:

Colonialism is a form of domination-the control by individuals or groups over the territory and/or behaviour of other individuals or groups (Horvath 1972, 46).

Lastly, Veracini states that colonialism firstly needs to be based on an unequal relationship between an indigenous group and a displaced invading power. He adds that in order for it to be marked as colonial, there is a requirement of a level of violence and resistance (Veracini 2020, 1-3).

In summary, both colonialism and neo-colonialism revolve around foreign powers controlling individuals or groups in a national territory. This control is often most notable in economic terms but spills over into political, cultural, social and educational terms. Where the definitions diverge most notably is in the physical presence of the alien power which in the case of neo-colonialism is lacking, often releasing invading actors from domestic and international critique. Additionally, colonialism and its resistance is linked with violence, an aspect that is often missing in cases of neo-colonialism. Finally, neo-colonialism is often defined as a deeply entrenched power imbalance between the West and the developing world. However, for the validity of this study, this thesis will maintain the notion as presented by Nkrumah central, which states that neo-colonialism can occur between nations that did not recently gain independence and states that did not colonise said area prior. Nonetheless, the theory of embedded presence of Western neo-colonialism throughout certain aspects of society is not dismissed. Throughout the remainder of this thesis, the term *neo-colonialist theory* will refer to the amalgamation of definitions and elements discussed in this chapter.

4. Methodology

In the following chapters, this thesis will analyse the period of colonialism in Nigeria under British rule and the subsequent struggle for independence, against the embedded neo-colonialist structures. This thesis will exclusively employ a qualitative analysis for the coming two chapters, utilising a selection of primary and secondary sources. As historians claim that sources utilised for historical chapters should be *as close to the event in time and place as possible*, the chapter will rely primarily on accounts made by academics from Nigeria or neighbouring nations when employing secondary source analysis. (Thies 2002, 356) Primary sources discussed in the ensuing two chapters will exclusively be formerly confidential faxes received and transmitted by former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher as released by the British Archive. Therefore, in the spirit of circumventing further selection bias in historical sources, this thesis will employ several repositories for a more nuanced analysis.

In the subsequent chapter this thesis will analyse more contemporary developments of Sino-African relations. As previously mentioned, accusations of neocolonialism being at play in Sino-African relations have received increasing attention from modern scholars and politicians alike. Therefore, this thesis will primarily analyse Sino-Nigerian relations in the 21st century during its sixth chapter. During this section, the thesis will once again apply a qualitative analysis. However, through the course of the subdivision chapters a wider array of sources will be utilised, both primary and secondary sources. Firstly in the political subdivision, Chinese and Nigerian governmental papers will be analysed as well as academic papers. Secondly, in the economic subdivision, the analysis will in addition to academic sources utilise a comparative study of the UN and the foundational document of the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation. Furthermore, the analysis provided in this subdivision will

employ statistics provided by online governmental repositories. Lastly, the cultural subdivision of Sino-African relations will once over apply Chinese and Nigerian governmental documents available on their respective online platforms as well as academic papers. Once over, a wider selection of repositories will be utilised. Additionally, as both Chinese and Nigerian political sources have the potential to conform to a national bias, foundational documents of international organisations and independent academic articles from an array of scholarly institutions will be utilised in order to uncloak any partiality.

In order to provide a comprehensive historical theoretical comparative case analysis, an academic study has to select cases that are "*similar enough and separate enough to permit treating them as comparable instances of the same general phenomenon.*" (Thies 2002, 353) Therefore, this thesis will keep the theoretical lens of neo-colonialism central, in order to determine the validity of the approach as a denominator of the nature of Nigerian bilateral relations and subsequently its relations with China. Additionally, the same selection of elements of Nigerian bilateral relations with Britain and China alike will be analysed and compared following each subchapter in chapter six, to once over seek out the accuracy of the neo-colonial lens as an analytical approach to Sino-Nigerian relations.

However, as the methodology employed during this thesis will mostly rely on secondary sources, it will nonetheless rely on the academic viability of previous academic reports, potentially leading to inaccurate results. Additionally, while the selection of cases analysed in this thesis attempts to compare a broader variety of societal aspects of Nigerian bilateral relations with Britain and China respectively in order to provide a more rounded study, many other features will not be analysed due to time constraints. Furthermore, as the later evolution of the theory of neo-colonialism focussed primarily on Western relations with the developing world, this thesis is bound to focus more on the foundation of neo-colonialism as defined by Nkrumah while other aspects of neo-colonial theory embody supplemental roles in the analysis. Lastly, while this thesis attempts to identify the neo-colonial aspects of Sino-Nigerian relations, it does not attempt to analyse the validity of alternative theoretical approaches.

Thus in short, this thesis will employ a historical theoretical comparative case analysis utilising a qualitative data set of primary and secondary sources alike. Throughout the coming chapters, the theoretical lens will remain a binding, central to this study.

5. British Colonialism and Neo-colonialism in Nigeria

5.1. Colonialism in Nigeria

Following the abolishment of slavery in 1807, the British empire established its first naval patrol in West-Africa in order to interrupt the activities of slave merchants in the region. The British built several naval stations on the West-African coast, policing the waters and stopping both European and African forces involved in the slave trade. Although slavery was abolished by the British empire, it still remained a crucial source of wealth and status for many tribes on the African West coast. During the era of the slave trade, indigenous coastal states had been involved in the protection of European merchants as the Europeans had not claimed or built any infrastructure along the coastline but the arrival of the British navy would bring a significant change in West-African relations with European powers (Falola 2009, 2).

In 1836, this change in power dynamics would become most apparent when a British warship captured four Spanish ships retrieving slaves purchased from the Bonny tribe. The Bonny tribe was amongst the tribes that still heavily relied on the slave trade as its main source of income. Therefore, in response to the British arrest, Bonny authorities seized the British ship and the British nationals on its decks. The British did not hesitate to subdue the Bonny attack utilising firepower and violence. Subsequently, the British imposed a treaty on the Bonny that would thwart the tribe from partaking in any further slave trade or causing harm to any British citizen. The Bonny incident of 1836 marked the start of strong British violence applied in order to exhibit their new position as the authority on the West coast. Additionally, the anti-slavery document would be the first of many treaties that Nigerian tribes would be forced to sign (Falola 2009, 2).

In the 1840s and 1850s, palm oil would gradually take over slave trade often due to direct British violence or in response to world demand. However, the production of palm oil was labour intensive work and many tribes still used forced labour in order to meet European demand. The British empire established the Lagos colony in 1861 and throughout the 1860s and 1870s would expand its territory in West-Africa. The British troops would use their anti-slavery stance as their reason for the expansion and forced Nigerian tribes to sign treaties with the British either entirely peacefully or through coercion. In 1885, at the Berlin Conference, the British declared a protectorate over the central and Eastern coast of Nigeria and smothered all other European competition in Nigeria (Falola 2009, 6-4).

Between 1886 and 1899, the Royal Niger Company (RNC) which emerged as a company exporting palm oil from Nigeria, was granted a charter from the British government to govern and extend the territories of Nigeria and monopolise the administration of justice. One year into the rule of the RNC, the Royal Niger Constabulary was established as the police force of the government. However, the Royal Niger Constabulary would quickly embody an army rather than a police force and

would violently enforce the laws of the RNC. The tribe leaders in Nigeria would be quick to accuse the soldiers as violators of people's rights (Falola 2009, 6).

The rule of the RNC would see many brutal conquests in order to subdue tribes that opposed the British authority. During their rule, the RNC was involved in over 100 military expeditions violently forcing the Nigerian kingdoms to sign new treaties further entrenching British rule over the area and for a last time counter any other European attempts to infiltrate Nigeria. One such notable conquest was the war between the British and the Ijebu in 1892. The Ijebu were a big force in the area and held a strategic position as a gateway to the Yoruba hinterland near Lagos where they had historically acted as middlemen in trade between merchants and local tribes. When in conflict the Ijebu had previously blocked supply routes and relied on their ancient gods and religion for their protection. The British conquest did not last longer than a few weeks, seeing the loss of hundreds of Ijebu soldiers. Thousands of the remaining Ijebu converted to Islam and Christianity as a final acceptance of a new authority in Southern Nigeria, displaying the cultural losses accompanying colonialism (Falola 2009, 11-13).

In the late 1890s, the treaties that were signed between the British and the tribes in Northern Nigeria started to falter. Kings in the North claimed that the British did not have any rights to exert power in the area as they had solely conceded to agreements regarding trade. In 1898 the British created the West-African Frontier Force (WAFF) with the aim of controlling the Northern tribes to a larger extent. A year later in 1899, the British government revoked the charter of the RNC and authorised the creation of a protectorate in the North. On the first of January 1900, Frederick Lugard would be named as the first high commissioner of the newly created Protectorate of Northern Nigeria. While the Northern tribes had to a large extent been spared of the level of violence that had been seen in Southern Nigeria, Lugard decided to rely violence and force to once again subdue the Northern population. Lugard believed that violence was needed in order to sustain the cooperation of the Northern tribes (Falola 2009, 13). In 1914 the Northern and Southern protectorates were amalgamated, marking the starting year of the formal unified Nigerian colony with Lugard as its first colonial officer (Olanrewaju 1987, 77).

The colony of Nigeria was created through the use of British violence as well as the lives of many Nigerian soldiers on both sides of the conflicts. The armies used by the British in their military conquests consisted mostly of African citizens of which most were Nigerians. It is estimated that only a mere twenty Europeans died in the conquest of Nigeria. In addition to the soldiers many Nigerians made it possible for the armies to operate, who were labelled as 'friendlies'. These roles included scouts, agents or spies. Lastly, there were the carriers who provided the armies with supplies. 300 carriers were needed in order to move an army of 100 soldiers (Falola 2009, 22-23).

Over the period of colonisation the British also heavily relied on the establishment of an elite loyal to British rule. Nigerians that received a higher education at an institution that was often controlled by the British started to believe that colonialism was responsible for employment on a

larger scale and that over time Nigerians would gain access to the national political sphere (Falola 2009, 22).

British colonial rule would remain reliant on violence, intertwining itself with national politics. Only following the second world war and the subsequent rise in Nigerian nationalism, did the British government turn to treaties and contracts once over. Decolonisation, which took off particularly in the early 50s lasting until independence in 1960, saw the British securing its favourable economic and political position and establishing its neo-colonial rule in Nigeria (Osoba 1987, 223).

5.2.1. From Colonialism to Neo-Colonialism

The British colonial period in Nigeria had left its mark on all components of Nigerian society. British colonial rule in Nigeria was aimed at sending as much profit back to London and spending as little capital as possible on governing the colony (Olanrewaju 1987, 77). This colonial foundation did however not leave the country of Nigeria when the British did.

Nkrumah explains that while neo-colonialism often is most prominent in economic terms, the political and cultural spheres of society experience the same neo-colonial relation (Nkrumah 1965, 239). Therefore the remainder of this chapter will analyse how a selection of components of Nigerian society were built by and bound to the British as parts of the decolonisation process, lasting until long after independence and taking on a neo-colonial role. The components analysed in this chapter are namely: transport infrastructure, resource extraction, financial relations and infrastructure, Nigerian politics and finally Nigerian society and education.

5.2.2. Transport Infrastructure under British Influence

Nigerian agriculture in the forms of palm oil, cocoa and peanuts was amongst the main appeals for European settlers arriving in Nigeria (Falola 2009, 1). After the British arrival production increased significantly as international demand for Nigerian agricultural goods rose. Until the 1890s, an array of methods was used in order to transport the goods to the ports in the South until the British government pressured merchants to better the existing inland waterways for bigger loads of produce (Olanrewaju 1987, 67).

In 1898, the construction of railroads in Nigeria started in order to keep up with the rising demand and subsequent production of Nigerian goods. By 1909, 486 km of railways had been constructed (Olanrewaju 1987, 67). By 1931 the remaining bulk of railways would be constructed reaching 3067 km, followed by a significant slowdown until Nigerian independence (Okoye et al 2019, 323).

The placement of the railways solely connected inland export-oriented production facilities with the two biggest ports of Nigeria (Olanrewaju 1987, 67). This meant that villages and tribes in neighbouring regions in Northern Nigeria did not gain any easier access to one another. Similarly, the

railroad that ended in the Lagos area which could have provided easier access for the citizens of Lagos to the Northern regions did not arrive in Lagos itself. Lagos at the time of the railroad construction was not yet the metropole that it is today but only an island which was too expensive to connect to the global railroad system. Instead the railway went to the nearby town of Apapa (Okoye et al 2019, 323).

In addition to the capital saved on the layout of the railroads and the subsequent disregard of convenience to the Nigerian people, the quality of the railroads highlights the sole focus on profit once over. While the standard gauge system was used in nearly all European nations, the British employed the narrow gauge system in Nigeria to save on expenses and time as the Nigerian terrain was often mountainous and nature remained unkempt (Olanrewaju 1987, 69). Lastly, the British only built a single track network limiting the amount of trains significantly. Due to the substandard transport infrastructure built, trains carrying Nigerian goods would only average a speed of 19 kmph (Olanrewaju 1987, 69).

The poor transport infrastructure can be a significant constraint on the development of countries such as Nigeria. The colonial railroads attracted over 200 buying and selling stations during its production, seemingly causing new economic centres, but the advanced urbanisation would just exacerbate the problems of ineffective transport infrastructure (Oraegbune and Ugwu 2020, 666; Okoye et al 2019, 323). Following independence, the colonial scar left on the transport infrastructure became more apparent and when the Nigerian governance requested loans from the West in order to tackle this infrastructure deficit they would often be rejected as the British economic interest in the region would not be harmed (Osoba 1987, 235).

5.2.3. Resource Extraction under British Influence

Nigeria had always held a high quantity of valuable resources and a big enough population to mine them. Before colonialism, extraction was very regional and fully controlled and used by local tribes. Some parts of the nation even saw regional guilds appear which would create a standard of production and safeguard the regional workers (Adebayo and Falola 1987, 92). Following the British arrival, resource exploitation became the new standard of Nigerian mining and would quickly become integral to the British economy (Adebayo and Falola 1987, 91).

It was said that the first wage earners in Nigeria were the miners, however, what is not mentioned is the labour conditions that the miners underwent (Adebayo and Falola 1987, 101). Firstly, between 1904 and 1907 many villages were attacked and inhabitants murdered by the British in order to obtain access to new mining grounds (Adebayo and Falola 1987, 102). Nigerian workers were often escaped slaves who would be forced to work in order to pay taxes to British rulers. Daily pay of a Nigerian tin-miner would be 5 times fewer than that of a white worker, being enough for no more than 3.5 pounds of grain. If workers would earn more, the British would lose their competitive edge in the

global markets. Additionally, Nigerian workers would be forced to live in unhygienic camps with unsafe conditions (Adebayo and Falola 1987, 103-105).

Currently, the most crucial resource extracted from Nigerian soil is Petroleum oil (Ibonye 2022, 1046). In 1908, German company Nigerian Bitumen Corporation was the first large foreign company to search for petroleum on Nigerian soil (Adebayo and Falola 1987, 98). Following the First World War, the German attempt dissolved and in 1937 the partially British owned Shell d'Arey Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria was created. The colonial government ensured that the monopoly held by Shell would remain strong, blocking any foreign attempts into the market (Adebayo and Falola 1987, 98). In 1960, the year in which Nigeria gained its independence, the 'fifty fifty' agreement was made according to which the profits of Nigerian petroleum would be split evenly between the British colonies and the host country. The profit would fall under another British introduced law of mutual tax exemption, meaning that the Nigerian government would only be able to tax its own half of the profits. It was estimated that the untaxed profit of Shell-BP between 1960 and 1970 had been worth several million of naira (Osoba 1987, 228-229).

The processing of crude oil products was an additional way in which the neo-colonial presence of the British in the Nigerian oil industry remained apparent. Processing plants of crude oil were most commonly located in Europe not in Nigeria (Nkrumah 1965, 13). This continued the trend of Nigerian crude products being sent to foreign economies where they would acquire a larger share of their worth. When a new refinery was being built in Nigeria, it was still owned by British multinational oil and gas company Shell-BP. The new refinery was merely built in order to refine oil that was meant for the Nigerian domestic market, saving the British company costs for the transport from and to Nigeria. (Nkrumah 1965, 13) This was part of the larger recurring neo-colonialist circle of profitability for the neo-coloniser in which crude resources would be refined by European owned companies and sold back to African states for hyperinflated prices.

In the 60s, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries OPEC was formed. Nigeria only joined ten years after its independence in 1970 (Osoba 1987, 229). OPEC created an international cartel which was eventually able to break the British monopoly over Nigerian Petroleum but not yet eradicate the British presence in Nigerian oil (Adebayo and Falola 1987, 98).

5.2.4. Financial Relations and Infrastructure under British Influence

Throughout the decolonisation process in the 1950s the British colonial administration ensured that a complex network of tax laws remained in place (Osoba 1987, 229). The Income Tax Ordinance of 1952, which would be adjusted but not weakened in 1957 and 1961, lowered the barriers for foreign companies to enter the Nigerian market and decreased the share of profit that the Nigerian government would gain. It allowed incoming foreign companies 'initial and annual allowances to be written off from profits for the purpose of computing taxable income' (Osoba 1987, 230). A second

law introduced in order to ensure tax reliefs for foreign, but mostly British companies in the decolonisation period was the Aid to Pioneer Industries Ordinance of 1952. This document allowed foreign companies a tax holiday of up to five years, once over limiting the tax paid to the Nigerian government (Osoba 1987, 230). These laws were renewed by the Nigerian government after independence in 1964, when the government reassured that ‘profits and dividends arising from sterling and non-sterling capital in approved projects may be freely transferred to the country of origin and that such capital may be repatriated at will’ (Osoba 1987, 231).

These blatantly prejudiced tax laws did however not go unnoticed. Jaja Wachuku, who would later become a controversial foreign affairs minister between 1961 and 1964 raised a point about another way in which British companies had been able to avoid paying tax to the Nigerian state. The British companies would convert their businesses into ‘Nigerian companies in the form of agencies’ which would allow them to pay even less tax to the host country of Nigeria (Osoba 1987, 224). When Wachuku raised this point in the Federal house of Representatives in 1957, the financial Secretary admitted to a larger legal tax evasion at play:

There is a provision in section 9 of the existing income tax ordinance which states that the gains or profits from the business of operating ships or aircrafts on by persons not resident in Nigeria shall be exempt from tax provided that a reciprocal exemption from tax is granted by the country in which such a person is resident (Osoba 1987, 224-225).

A second manner in which the British attempted to remain in control was through the banking and monetary systems of Nigeria. In the 1930s the first attempts were made by Nigerian bankers to break the banking monopoly held by the Bank of British West-Africa since 1894. The most successful attempt was made by the National Bank of Nigeria which inspired other smaller banks to try and enter the market in the 1950s. However, the British countered these attempts by raising barriers for smaller banks to enter the market. New banks would not be allowed to lend big amounts or at all to certain potential lenders. However, when independence came closer attempts were made by the Nigerians to loosen these restrictions (Olanrewaju 1987, 74). Nonetheless, while success stories of larger centralised and nationalised banks do appear, smaller banks in the greater banking industry in Nigeria remained under foreign influence (Lukasiewicz 2022, 190).

Another way in which this influence was kept was through the currency used in a former colony. As such, the Nigerian pound, the first independent Nigerian currency following independence, was fixed to the pound sterling until the naira was introduced in 1973. Therefore, for the first 13 years after independence, Nigerian trade and exchanges remained dependent on the fluctuations in the British economy (Lukasiewicz 2022, 190).

Nkrumah argues that the UK profited more from its former colonies after independence than before. He states that it was therefore in the British financial interest to keep economic development slow in Nigeria (Nkrumah 1965, 52). This additionally meant that the Nigerians were unable to obtain favourable loans from their former colonisers. In most cases loans would only be granted if the lending country abided by a certain set of intrusive conditions such as information about their national politics and supervision of the use of the loan (Nkrumah 1965, 242-243). When loans were presented to the Nigerians they would be offered against unfavourable interest at best reaching 5 percent (Osoba 1987, 235).

Nigerian scholar Nzimiro argues that the British contractual and bilateral control of the economy held Nigerian politics in an inescapable headlock. The foreign corporations had created an economy with special concessions assuring huge profits. When the government would try and restructure the national economy to fit a Nigerian development plan, the multinational companies would obstruct and harm the economy (Ottenberg 2007, 22).

5.2.5. Nigerian Politics under British Influence

Colonialism and neo-colonialism alike required support of the elite politically involved corps of society. Throughout the British colonisation the African-educated elite played a crucial role in spreading the propaganda claiming the supposed benefits of colonialism for the Nigerian people. While a few believed these words, a larger group claimed that access to jobs and wages would be followed by increased political influence and that in the long-term colonialism would have positive effects on the Nigerian society (Falola 2009, 24).

After a long miscalculated period, these expectations did see a sliver of truth as more Nigerians would enter the national government around the period of decolonisation. However, when independence came to Nigeria, the selected few who had received higher education and had been able to apply this knowledge in national politics had learned everything under the mask of the British. The only international viable language possessed by the fresh graduates in Nigerian politics in the 1960s was English and their view of global politics was taught from a British perspective (Osoba 1987, 244-245). This kept the Nigerian politicians reliant on its relations to its former coloniser, forcing a level of trust. Accordingly, British embassies across the world were in charge of representing the Nigerian interests until the end of the first republic in 1966 (Osoba 1987, 244-245). Another way in which this closely linked political system could be seen was in the foreign missions of Nigeria after independence. In 1965, 213 Nigerian officers were on foreign missions of which only 5 were in the communist block and 53 in the United Kingdom itself (Osoba 1987, 244-245).

While seemingly the neo-colonial political bond between the British and Nigeria was mostly present in the first decade following independence, a fax between a British diplomat in Nigeria and Prime minister Margaret Thatcher in 1979 revealed a long lasting and firm bond between the two governments. 1979 would mark the first election of the second republic after a brief military rule under later elected president Olusegun Obasanjo. The fax discusses the upcoming elections and ensuring a future pro-British government. It states that the current military government '*would not be averse to secret diplomatic exchanges to prevent*' an anti-British government from winning the election. Furthermore, it claims that: *in any parting of ways with Britain, Nigeria would in the long run suffer most.* Lastly, the fax recalls '*Nigeria's constructive efforts in recent years to sell the anglo-american proposals to the front line states*' (Margaret Thatcher Foundation 2009, 19).

This fax shows that the Nigerian government still considered and supported the British influence in Nigeria and would be willing to engage in secret with the British government in order to ensure the continuation of this relation.

5.2.6. Nigerian Society under British Influence

Lastly, neo-colonialism also took place in the daily lives of citizens. Following independence in many African nations Western sources of culture would find their ways into society, in particular the dominance of Western news sources and its educational system would become notable.

Nkrumah discusses the presence of the United States Information Agency (USIA) in all of decolonised Africa. In his book from 1965, Nkrumah states that the USIA 'blasts pro US propaganda throughout Africa from 30 different radio hubs'. Additionally, the USIA would be in charge of over 50 libraries and cinemas on the African continent and subsidize and distribute over 60 American based newspapers (Nkrumah 1965, 249-250). The dominance of Western based news distribution is also found in another fax to Margaret Thatcher from 1979. A conversation between a British diplomat and general Shehu Yar'Adua, second in command in 1979 and future president of Nigeria is recalled in the fax. In the fax the British diplomat states that the argumentation of Yar'Adua alludes to two articles from the economist and a report from the BBC. This shows that Western sources of news and accompanying propaganda were active all across the African continent unmistakably affecting public thought (Margaret Thatcher Foundation 2009, 26).

Another area of society that witnesses Western dominance is the Nigerian educational system. International schools in Nigeria follow the International Baccalaureate (IB). One paper by Emenike and Plowright attempts to analyse to what extent indigenous Nigerian students attending international schools in Nigeria are able to successfully negotiate their own identities. It is found that the curriculum of international schools in Nigeria reinforces the ideas of a civilised and an uncivilised

society, augmenting a colonial hierarchical dynamic between the West and its former colonies. According to the study most of the students at international schools in Nigeria believe their indigenous cultures and society to be inferior to their Western counterparts. The authors finish their report saying:

It is ironic that, while Western education systems are hailed for encouraging critical thought, the students in this study are more likely to question and resist Nigerian cultures, rather than interrogate the Western cultures that are thrust upon them (Emenike and Plowright 2017, 13).

This chapter has shown a limited but carefully chosen selection of British neo-colonialist practices in Nigeria. It can be seen that all aspects covered are intertwined to some extent and part of a larger exploitative mechanism introduced and sustained by the British government. While the main aim of the British government remained economic, it required other layers of society to cooperate in order to maximise its profit over time.

6. The Nature of Contemporary Sino-African Relations

The Sino-Nigerian relationship began to take form in 1971 prior to the Chinese replacement of Taiwan on the UN Security Council in the same year (Pay et al 2020, 247). Over the span of the following 50 years, Nigeria remained a central figure in broader Sino-African relations and began to form a complex relationship with China, seen in an array of societal aspects.

Therefore, in the following chapter, this thesis will once over analyse the same selection of cases as provided in the previous chapter, and compare and contrast the nature seen in both relationships.

6.1. Sino-Nigerian Transport Infrastructure

Many African countries lack the indigenous engineering capability to construct large-scale infrastructure projects, as well as the capital to reduce the infrastructure deficit. On the contrary, the Chinese economic rise is often linked to its prioritisation of infrastructure development, missing in African nations and neglected by Western investors (Zhao. 2014. 1036). In line with this prioritisation, a famous Chinese proverb states: ‘If you want to get rich, build a road’ (Lechini et al 2020, 352). Consequently, according to a 2009 report by the World bank, 33.4 percent of the Chinese capital used in Africa between 2000 and 2009 was utilised for the construction of new transport infrastructure, of which railways were the most common form. Nigeria was then, and still is, one of the biggest recipients of these Chinese investments (Lechini et al 2020, 348).

As shown in the previous chapter, Nigeria was left with an inefficient railway system, constructed during the British colonial rule. Attempts to refurbish the national railway system near the end of colonial rule or following independence were often blocked or inconvenienced by British influence. The poor transport infrastructure present in Nigeria remained a significant constraint on Nigerian development. Therefore in the late 1990s, former Nigerian president Obasanjo introduced a new policy titled ‘oil for infrastructure’, which would allow bidders, in particular Chinese bidders, to acquire auctioned oil blocks in return for investments in major infrastructure projects (Mthembu-Salter 2009, 1). After a short period of hesitation and a few rounds of bidding, Chinese companies acquired the auctioned oil blocks and Nigeria would receive Chinese commitments to the construction of the railway from Lagos to Kano, crossing the country from South to North. Additionally, Chinese companies would be utilised for the renovation of the Kaduna oil refinery, the construction of a hydroelectric power station in Mambilla and China would cover the majority of the finances required (Mthembu-Salter 2009, 1). However, following the election of president Yar’Adua in 2007, the ‘oil for infrastructure’ format of Obasanjo came to an end as the projects were put on hold (Mthembu-Salter 2009, 1).

Nonetheless, in 2009, the Nigerian Minister of Transport Isa-Bio renegotiated the railway infrastructure contract with the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC). The new agreement stated that the original Lagos-Kano project would be divided into four major segments: Lagos-Ibadan (156 km); Ibadan-Kaduna (667 km); Kaduna-Kano (305 km) and Abuja-Kaduna (187 km). The four different segments would be constructed over a period of 25 years. (Lechini, 354) The Abuja-Kaduna segment was the first portion of the Lagos-Kano project constructed for roughly 850 million USD and was finished in 2016. Following the inauguration of the first segment, the Lagos-Ibadan was approved for a value of 1200 million USD as well as the Kaduna-Kano segment, valued at 1685 million USD. The last segment from Ibadan to Kaduna is valued at 6680 million USD. Throughout the railway construction thus far, the Chinese government-owned China Exim Bank has provided concessional loans in support of the CCECC projects (Lechini et al 2020, 354).

During the construction of the Abuja-Kaduna segment, the CCECC remained in charge of the project, employing over 4000 local workers. Since the inauguration of the railway segment, the CCECC has taken on a mere supporting role, offering technical support, training and commercial assistance to the Nigerian Railway Corporation, who is fully in charge of the operations on the segment. The introduction of the Abuja-Kaduna line has caused a reduction in internal transport costs and time, increased the freight capacity of trains on the railway and benefitted passengers by providing a safe and fast alternative to road travel (Lechini et al 2020, 355). Prior to the construction of the Abuja-Kaduna segment, travel from Abuja to Kaduna was notoriously dangerous both due to the imperfect road conditions as well as a significant increase of criminals active on the track (PMnews 2021). Usman Isah, a civil servant, who travelled between Kaduna and Abuja weekly stated: *"I used to travel every week to Kaduna to see my family but that changed because the roads are no longer very safe. ... (W)ith the resumption of train services on the Abuja and Kaduna route, I have now started going to Kaduna weekly and it is safer and smoother"* (PMnews 2021).

In May 2023, former Nigerian president Buhari commissioned the Kajola wagon assembly plant in Ogun. The Kajola plant, which was agreed upon as an aspect of the larger project between Nigeria and the CCECC in 2019, has become the first railway wagon assembly plant in West-Africa, enabling Nigeria to not only aid its national railway infrastructure, but also that of other countries in the West-African region. The Kajola plant is expected to produce 500 wagons per year and create over 5,000 new working positions (Alade for The Guardian 2023).

However, while the transport infrastructure project looks solely positive at face value, the worker conditions during the construction of the Abuja-Kaduna segment remained harsh. Workers underwent long working hours of 12 hours a day, 7 hours a week in return for a low wage. The vast majority of employment at the CCECC was made up of Nigerian workers, seeing a percentage of 95 percent. Nonetheless, senior positions at the company and during projects remain most commonly in Chinese hands (Lechini et al 2020, 355).

The railway infrastructure left behind by the British colonial powers in Nigeria harmed the development of the country and remained unaided as the British would not acquire any economic gains. Nkrumah claims exploitation without redress to be a central aspect of neo-colonialism, which can very well be identified in the British-Nigerian colonial transport infrastructure relationship. In contrast, Nigeria reached out to China for infrastructure investments under two presidents and two systems and China met the requirements introduced by Nigeria thus far, preserving Nigerian agency in the matter. However, in return, China has gained a stronger footing in the Nigerian oil industry and has displayed poor conditions for locally employed workers. Additionally, the projects have not yet been finished and therefore the success of this Sino-Nigerian cooperation can not yet be determined. Nonetheless, while harsh aspects of the Chinese role in Nigerian transport infrastructure can be identified, the lack of any Chinese attempt at exploitation or control in combination with the offer to fill the much needed infrastructure gap while leaving the Nigerian government in control, dismisses any substantial claim of neo-colonialism in the Sino-Nigerian transport infrastructure cooperation.

6.2. Sino-Nigerian Resource Extraction

As under British colonial rule, the Nigerian economy remains reliant on the extraction of its natural resources, most notably its large share in oil and natural gases (Ibonye 2022, 1046). As early as the mid 1990s, China demonstrated interest in African oil reserves and, increasingly, in Nigerian oil. Consequently, in 2021, Nigeria surpassed South Africa and notably Angola, another major oil exporter, as China's largest trade partner in Africa (Lu 2023, 9). As of 2023, the estimated sum of Chinese investments in the Nigerian oil sector is larger than 83.94 billion USD (Lu 2023, 15).

As mentioned in the previous subchapter, former Nigerian president Obasanjo introduced the 'oil for infrastructure' in the 1990s, which allowed nations access to auctioned oil blocks in return for investments in infrastructure projects (Mthembu-Salter 2009, 1). In order to sustain the high level of growth of the Chinese economy, Nigerian oil reserves were an integral aspect of the second communique of Sino-Nigerian economic cooperation announced by president Jiang Zemin in 2002. (Lu 2023, 7) However, during the first oil block auction in 2005, Chinese companies failed to bid as the Chinese had mistakenly believed to have acquired access to the blocks during prior negotiations. In the following year, the former Chinese president Hu Jintao signed a Memorandum of Understanding during a visit to Nigeria offering a trade of Nigerian oil for aid in railway infrastructure construction, in line with the understanding of the 'oil for infrastructure' policy (Umukoro 2022, 514). Accordingly, Hu Jintao's visit secured four petroleum drilling licences for Chinese companies in Nigeria in return for an investment of four billion USD in oil and infrastructure. Additionally, the China Offshore Oil Company purchased 2.3 billion USD worth of shares in a Nigerian owned oil exploration block and China pledged 267 million USD to the creation of the Lekki Free Trade Zone near Lagos and amongst a bulk of Nigerian oil industries (Umukoro 2022, 514).

The Lekki Free Trade Zone was an economic area based on the Special Economic Zones created in China during the late 1970s. SEZs are defined as follows by the United Nations Development Programme:

SEZs are all geographically demarcated areas within a country, which functions with different administrative, regulatory and fiscal regimes to the rest of the country, usually concerned with investment conditions, taxation and international trade regulations (UNDP 2015, 8).

The Lekki Free Trade Zone (LFTZ) is operated through public–private partnerships, which was co-established by the local government in Lagos. The LFTZ received preferential policies from the Nigerian government including federal, state and local government’s tax waivers, an unlimited quota for imports and exports and preferential tariff and for products exported to Western economies (Lu 2023, 10). Following the construction of the LFTZ, the Chinese consortium established the China-Africa Lekki Investment Company which joined with the Lagos State Government and the Nigerian Lekki Worldwide Investment Ltd. to establish the Lekki Free Zone Development Company (LFZDC). The Chinese consortium holds the majority share of the LFZDC with 60 percent while the remaining two organisations both hold 20 percent (UNDP 2015, 25).

Following the 2008 financial crisis, the development of the LFTZ slowed down significantly. Nonetheless, the Chinese government has shown increasing interest in turning the LFTZ into a success story of Sino-Nigerian economic relations. In 2015, the LFZDC pledged another 265 million USD to the development of the LFTZ of which 200 million was invested by the Chinese consortium (UNDP 2015, 27). After Nigeria officially joined the Chinese “Belt and Road” initiative, interest of foreign enterprises in the LFTZ soared up from 21 current Chinese companies to 138 applying international members, which is anticipated to create 50,000 job vacancies for local people (Lu 2023, 10).

Many companies active in the LFTZ provide dormitories for their workers. The United Nations Development Programme states that *Workers staying in dormitories tended to possess positive attitudes towards the accommodation provided by their employers* (UNDP 2015, 28). Additionally, the average income of a local worker would be between 12 and 18 thousand naira, while that of workers in the neighbouring Chinese funded Free Trade Zone of Ogun-Guangdong is 30 thousand (Xia 2016, 48).

Both the Nigerian and Chinese government attempt to underline the Free Trade Zones as a good example of Sino-Nigerian relations (UNDP 2015 27).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, one of the methods used by the British to maximise the profit of Nigerian oil extraction revolved around outsourcing the crude oil produce to European based oil refineries, adding value to the final products. The inability of Nigeria to refine its own crude oil left the country to import its fuel from foreign economies making up 20 percent of its total imports in

2017 (Umukoro 2022, 5216). Nigeria's refining capacity only satisfied 17 percent of its domestic needs. This refining inability left Nigeria with an oil trade deficit lowering from a profit of nearly 700 000 million USD in 2011 to a loss of 2534 million USD in 2017. Therefore in 2019, the Nigerian government signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Chinese Peiyang Chemical Equipment Co.Limited to build a modular refinery in the country (Umukoro 2022, 516-517).While Western businesses believe that the investments made in African refineries will not be enough to affect the Nigerian economy significantly, Chinese national oil companies have proven their ability to turn other oil projects in Africa and Central Asia into profitable industries (Umukoro 2022, 521).

In May 2023 Nigeria opened the Dangote oil refinery in the Lekki Free Trade Zone which will have the capacity of refining 650 000 barrels of oil. As the largest refinery on African soil it is estimated to fulfil Nigerian demands for refined oil products and export a significant amount to other economies (Salaudeen and Princewill 2023). While the funding of the project was mostly from Nigerian sources, the technical experience of the Chinese oil company Sinopec was in charge of the production of crucial components of the build.

However, the Chinese engagement with Nigerian oil as well as the creation of the LFTZ have not gone without criticism. Chinese oil infrastructure in the Niger delta came under threat of local militant groups, with the speaker for the militants Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta warning that:

The Chinese government and its oil companies to steer well clear of the Niger Delta. Chinese citizens found in oil installations will be treated as thieves. The Chinese government by investing in stolen crude places its citizens in our line of fire (Zhao 2014, 1048).

Additionally, the creation of the LFTZ has, according to local inhabitants, destroyed local customs and culture as well as the environment. Adunbi mentions that the pamphlets of the Lekki Area show palm trees which have been destroyed in the construction of the zone and explains that local communities claim that the ground should be passed down from ancestors down from pre-colonial times to modern day (Adunbi 2022,190).

The British dismissal of local refined oil demands and the harsh conditions in which mine workers had to perform were central components of colonial practices in Nigeria's oil industry. As mentioned in the previous subchapter, British neo-colonialism neglected any needs and benefits to the Nigerian economy. The components of the Chinese presence in the oil industry of Nigeria discussed in this chapter, show that the Nigerian economy has benefited significantly, both nationally and regionally. While a large Chinese share in the LFTZ can be identified, the investments reflect the ownership. Additionally, local culture and environments are damaged by Chinese projects but have been greenlit by local and national governments in the name of economic expansion. Therefore, while signs of a trade deficit and harm to local traditions are present, they are shadowed by the economic

benefits for Nigeria. Once over, the oil industry does not show signs of being part of Chinese neo-colonial practices in Nigeria.

6.3. Sino-Nigerian Financial Relations and Infrastructure

Under British rule, the Nigerian citizens saw a foreign power in control of their national political institutions which spilled over into their financial institutions and deprived Nigeria from securing preferable loans needed for its national development. The presence of Chinese financial institutions started early in the 21st century when larger loans were promised to Nigeria and the FOCAC framework was established.

The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) which was founded in 2000, is a forum connecting African nations with China attempting to work towards increased cooperation in politics, economics, social issues, culture and the environment (Li et al 2012, 5). As many bilateral projects between African nations and China are done through the FOCAC framework and often require Chinese funding, the Chinese Exim Bank and the People's Bank of China both became participating agencies in the FOCAC structure. The Exim Bank, as mentioned prior in this chapter, funds larger development projects while the People's Bank of China attempts to promote further Sino-African cooperation by working with African multilateral development banks (Li et al 2012, 13).

Around 2010, the Nigerian banking sector required a major reform following international and domestic financial turbulence. In order to acquire stability in the banking sector, Nigerian banks required major external infusions of interest and investments (Alao 2010, 4). Three major Nigerian commercial banks had established links with Chinese banks. The first one of these banks is Nigeria's oldest bank, First Bank. The First Bank was granted a licence to operate in China enhancing its financial capability to the Asian continent. Additionally, the First Bank signed several funding and investment agreements with Chinese companies regarding Sino-Nigerian shared construction and trade (Alao 2010, 3). A second bank is the Standard IBTC which linked itself to the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) after the ICBC acquired a 20 percent stake in the Standard Bank Group of which Standard IBTC is a key figure. This purchase links the Chinese bank to a number of Nigerian projects while not losing a significant part of its agency (Alao 2010, 3). Lastly, the Nigerian Export-Import Bank has been linking itself to the Chinese Exim Bank. It grants loans to Nigerian exporters and offers credit insurance for foreign importers. This link was made with the intent of easing trade between Nigeria and China.

This easing of trade between Nigeria and China additionally led to a three year currency swap of 15 Billion Chinese yuan for 720 Billion Nigerian naira in 2018. In 2017, China became Nigeria's third largest trade partner responsible for 8.7 percent of total Merchandise trade (Osiobe and Osegbe 2019, 4). However, as the US dollar remains the reserve currency of the world, most trade between nations requires use of the USD. For instance, when Nigeria would import goods from China, it would

be obligated to convert the Nigerian naira to USD, which would then be converted to Chinese yuan in order to pay China. The reliance on the American currency created unnecessary steps for the completion of their trade. The swapping of the nation's currencies would allow national banks to provide a level of readily available liquidity to business owners from their respective nations indulging in trade with the opposing nation, once over limiting the hurdles present in bilateral trade. Additionally, diversifying a nation's currency reserves can combat the reliance on one singular one. Amid a Nigerian recession a few years prior, domestic businesses required loans of USD in order to complete imports, causing a scarcity of the currency which in turn led to the losses of the naira against USD (Osiobe and Oseghe 2019, 4). The swap was deemed successful after the three years had passed and was renewed in 2021 (Kalejaiye for Businessday 2022).

After obtaining independence, Nigeria demanded loans from Britain and the other Western powers in order to fund its development plan. Nigeria would either not be granted a loan at all, and when it would, the loan would be accompanied by specific demands. In more recent years, Nigeria was granted loans from international institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), however these loans remained constricted in an elaborate web of prerequisites. Requirements such as the devaluation of a national currency, a reduction of the cost of exports and the elimination of subsidies for food have been found amongst others as conditions for IMF loans. These limitations keep developing nations more prone to fall to exploitation by foreign companies (Shafiu et al 2023, 3-4). Therefore, Nigeria has increasingly been accepting low interest, no-strings-attached loans from China, accumulating a significant debt (Ibonye 2022, 1046). Chinese investments abide by a policy of 'non-interference' in domestic affairs unlike the West, which requires certain precedents to be in place in African countries willing to receive Western investments. For many African leaders, eradicating poverty is seen as the priority, long before ensuring environmental conservation, a transparent model of governance or even human right protection. (Zhao 2014, 1034) However, these investments add to the total Nigerian debt. As of 2023, Nigeria owes a total of over 4 336 million USD to China, accounting for just over 10 percent of its national debt. While China is certainly the largest bilateral provider of loans to Nigeria, it still remains small in comparison to the IMF and World Bank which combined hold a debt over Nigeria of over 17 000 million USD (Debt Management Office Nigeria, 2023).

The British political control spilled over to control over the Nigerian financial institutions by pegging the national currency to the British pound sterling and keeping British banks as the primary methods of lending in the country, while actively hindering the establishment of small domestically created lending facilities. Additionally, Nigeria would remain unable to obtain any preferable loans from its previous coloniser in order to assess the shortcomings of the Nigerian society. As several decisive aspects of the British neo-colonialism present in its financial relations with Nigeria are directly linked to a previous colonial past, namely *keeping* financial institutions such as banks in place and pegging their currency to the Nigerian pound, the presence of Chinese neo-colonialism in these

areas can swiftly be dismissed. Additionally, the loans provided by China offer an attractive alternative for Nigeria as they are accompanied by a selection of prerequisites, allowing Nigeria to belatedly invest its loans as it deems necessary for national development. This once over creates the image of a mutual benefit.

6.4. Sino-Nigerian Political Relations

Sino-Nigerian political relations have over their relatively short history developed significantly. As mentioned prior, former Nigerian president Obasanjo stated in 2006 that ‘this is the century for China to lead the world. And when you are leading the world, we want to be very close behind you’ (Zhao 2014, 1038). In the same year, Nigeria was amongst the first African countries to sign a ‘comprehensive strategic partnership’ with China, leading to a deepening of an array of fields of cooperation (Osondu-Oti 2023, 1). This ‘comprehensive strategic partnership would once over be deepened further in 2010 (Lechini et al 2020, 349)

One of the fields in which Sino-Nigerian and broader Sino-African relations deepened are the bilateral political relations between China and African nations. During FOCAC summit speeches held by Chinese representatives, slogans of ‘win-win cooperation,’ ‘people-to-people contact’ and ‘deepening political relation of equality and trust,’ are reiterated. Additionally, Chinese representatives remind their African counterparts of a historically shared stance against colonialism claiming to be part of ‘a community with a shared future’ as ‘China is the largest developing country while Africa is the continent with the largest number of developing countries’ (Mierzejewski et al 2022, 655-656).

Another phrase commonly used in Chinese international relations with African nations is *Guanxi*. Mierzejewski defines the term as follows:

An informal norm of social ties that regulates and facilitates privileged access to personalised exchange at both dyadic and network levels, forming a complex network of reciprocal indebtedness, duties, and obligations non-ideological, pragmatic, and experimental (Mierzejewski et al 2022, 657).

In essence, *guanxi* revolves around remaining a political friend to all and exchanging favours from country to country. Accordingly, under the name of the *guanxi* system, China built lavish infrastructure projects around Africa including the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa (Mierzejewski et al 2022, 658).

Additionally, much of the Chinese influence in African nations, and thus Nigeria stems from its interpersonal contact. China has over the previous decades offered an array of traineeships and

scholarships to African citizens, both in China and in the citizens' own home country. In 2012 during a FOCAC meeting, former Chinese president Hu Jintao offered 18,000 government scholarships to African citizens in which the political figures selected would partake in three-week political tours of China (Zhao 2014, 1037). Consequently, China has been accused of creating a system of 'elite capture' attempting to shape the future leading groups of African nations with an affinity with China (Mierzejewski et al 2022, 661). However, these government scholarships were optional and supported increased mutual understanding of a growing foreign partner rather than building a future Nigerian politician from the ground up. Nonetheless, these traineeships do forge a closer bond between Nigerian politicians and their Chinese counterparts as their newly obtained knowledge is catered to Sino-Nigerian trade relations specifically.

The closer growing political relationship between China and Nigeria is also reflected clearly in recent statements by politicians of the respective nations. Chinese ambassador to Nigeria introduced the *Initiative of Sharing Chinese Harmony and Performing Nigeria-China Symphony* in 2022. He summarised the initiative as "four beams and eight columns". The "four beams" include the Harmony in Coexistence, Harmony in Integration, Harmony in Diversity, and Harmony in Development, while the eight columns include Happiness and Friendliness of Family and Society and Unity and Concordance of Nation and Culture. He finishes his statement by saying that in his view, Sino-Nigerian cooperation is the epitome of Sino-African relations (Jianchun 2023, 1).

Similarly, former Nigerian president Buhari who spoke at the State House in 2020 stated, "Please convey our appreciation to President Xi Jinping for the contribution of China towards reversing the infrastructure deficit we suffer in the areas of rail, roads, airports and power. There's no way a country can develop without these things,". Former Chinese ambassador Dr Pingjian replied, saying that the 50 years of Sino-Nigerian relations were "the best time we have had. You have visited China twice, showed us solidarity at critical times, particularly when COVID-19 broke out, and you always personally attend the commissioning of projects Nigeria does in alliance with China"(State House 2020).

Under British rule and following independence, the Nigerian elite still remained under a strong British influence, being represented by British ambassadors abroad and requesting a British input regarding national political developments. The political elite appointed as well as created by the British government could be found in all the levels of national governance. In recent years, a greatly accelerated friendly political relationship between Chinese and Nigerian elites can be analysed. Additionally, scholarships granted to Nigerian citizens creates an additional predilection for Chinese economic relations. However, the interconnectivity of Chinese and Nigerian politicians did not commence on an infringed national governmental level such as that of British-Nigerian relations.

Therefore, reaching similar levels of governmental reliability as seen in the time of British neo-colonialism do not seem likely to be met.

6.5. Sino-Nigerian Societal Exchanges

Sino-African cooperation in societal exchanges happened early in their relationship. Between 1956 and 1996, China supported 800 different projects across the African continent of which several revolved around education (Li et al 2012, 5). During the aforementioned FOCAC meeting of 2012, former Chinese president Hun Jintao additionally offered traineeships and scholarships to 30 000 African citizens across a variety of sectors. These sectors included traineeships in engineering as well as offers to African students to study at Chinese universities. The university offers were well received by most students as they were regarded to be of a rich value for career enhancement for a significantly lower cost when compared to Western equivalents. Additionally, the scholarships would reveal more about the inner workings of a growing Nigerian partner (Zhao 2014, 1037). Traineeships would usually take on a more hands-on approach. As shown previously in this chapter, one of these traineeships revolved around making workers of the Nigerian Railway Corporation familiar with the newly constructed railway system by the CCECC.

Additionally, in recent years, Chinese media outlets have been spreading across the African continent. Beijing encourages the spreading as an exchange between African and Chinese media in order to enhance mutual understanding between the trade partners (Zhao 2014,1047). This view is shared by the Nigerian Television Authority, which is one of the three African news outlets holding accredited and registered foreign correspondents in China. A respondent stated:

I think Nigerian media/newsrooms are too involved in local politics to understand the shifting geopolitical storms heading for the continent when China has successfully displaced former colonial trading partners. I am not aware of any local newspaper with a desk/section dedicated to China–Africa reporting. (Ojo 2020, 1187)

Another way in which the Chinese presence interacts with local African societies is through business practices. Fieldwork conducted by Antoine Kernén and Katy Nganting in Ghana found that Chinese state owned enterprises attempted to hire as many local employees as they believed workforce localisation to be significantly beneficial to the companies' welfare as it would reduce labour costs and local workers would more easily adapt the Chinese management to the local political context (Zhao 2014 ,1047). Additionally, a considerable number of Chinese businessmen have attempted to 'give back' to local society. For instance, Chinese company CNPC donated 700 000 USD to set up an Education and Training Fund and a computer laboratory at Juba University. Furthermore, the Chinese company constructed a cultural centre in Malakal and basketball courts in Juba (Zhao 2014, 1047). The interpersonal relations between Chinese businessmen and societies can

be found in Nigeria as well. Author Fangzhu Lu found that at least 11 Chinese businessmen were granted the title of Nigerian traditional chieftains as a form of gratitude from local people. One of these Chinese businessmen was Hu Jieguo, the former vice president of China–Africa Business Council, who received the traditional title of Baba Ase, meaning “serving intercontinental development’ in 2001. Hu established the Jimen restaurant in Lagos which grew to be a multi-industry enterprise covering tourism, construction and international trade. Prior to receiving his title, Hu invested in several local projects including four local primary schools for over 200 million naira (Lu 2023, 12).

Western control of societal aspects including education and media lingered long after Nigerian independence. The Chinese media outlets covered in Nigeria seem to mostly revolve about informing national citizens about the rising presence of China in Nigerian society. This view is seemingly shared by the Nigerian press, who also believe information about Nigeria’s largest trade partner to be of importance to the local communities. As shown in a prior chapter, Western systems of education remain in control in Nigerian society until this day. Chinese businessmen and politicians have however influenced the industry, either through the construction of educational facilities in which Nigerian education is organised or by offering Chinese traineeships and scholarships in which Nigerian students and employees are familiarised with Chinese teachings. While Chinese methods are employed in these scholarships they remain mostly optional and of short term unlike the deeply embedded Western views that remain central in international schools in Nigeria. Chinese traineeships seem to largely revolve around educating Nigerian employees about Chinese built infrastructure and technology often already present in Nigeria. Author Rizvi argued for a Western dominance of education in developing nations to be an unmistakable aspect of neo-colonialism. By teaching an alternative view, the Chinese presence could dismantle the Western neo-colonialism present in Nigerian education.

7. Conclusion

This thesis has through the use of a historical comparative lens attempted to identify what aspects of neo-colonialism can be found in modern Sino-Nigerian relations. By analysing economic, political and societal elements of the Sino-Nigerian relationship and comparing them to their British-Nigerian historical counterparts, this thesis has found that neo-colonialism is an inadequate theory to explain the intricate nature of the bilateral relationship between China and Nigeria. When neo-colonialist aspects, such as the creation of a political elite or the withholding of labour costs, could be identified in both cases studied, the extent to which this occurred differs significantly. Following colonialism, Nigeria remained under British economic control which hampered Nigerian attempts to further national development. On the contrary, it can be concluded without reasonable doubt, that the Nigerian relationship with China has benefited the African nation immensely, by providing loans and expertise in areas that are seen as pivotal to the development of its society. In other layers of society such as education and media, Western neo-colonial dominance remains relevant and Chinese alternatives could have a positive effect by diversifying the sources.

However, while this work identifies the existence of mutual benefits to the bilateral relations, it should be reiterated that there are risks and opportunities at play like any engagement between two actors. While Nigeria has thus far as an actor been able to assert a significant amount of agency, seemingly aiming to benefit its own societal developments, it needs to cement its position in the Sino-Nigerian relationship as an independent partner. Similarly, it is in China's interest to assure itself as a responsible partner of Nigeria, remaining receptive to domestic demands.

Neo-colonialism is a term that has often been used to describe Sino-Nigerian and broader Sino-African relations by international politicians. However, this thesis has attempted to show that the theory is broadly not applicable to describe the relations at play. Nonetheless, alternative lenses and theories have not been applied in this work and thus for further research, this work suggests that future studies focus on alternative lenses to more accurately analyse Sino-Nigerian relations. Lastly, Sino-Nigerian relations are evolving at an astonishing rate and will therefore require close monitoring in order to track future developments.

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