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Bachelor thesis



Africa's partners: buying friends by building roads?

How the West is responding to China's growing relations with Nigeria

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Abstract

China's economic growth is translating into growing international political power. Over the years, Beijing is trying to project this power abroad, which is causing concern in the West. Not only is the West challenged by a new economic giant, there is now also a clash of ideologies, where the West wants to maintain the current world order, and Beijing challenges it. This has given rise to terms like 'a new Cold War'. While China is expanding to Africa, the question arises whether the West continues as a declining power in Africa or whether it is going to compete. Africa is the continent with the most countries, who have different problems, values and systems. Therefore, this study will be conducted through a single case study, examining the case of Nigeria. Its economic and population size and its intra-continental power makes it an interesting case to study. As a result the following research question is formed: *How is the West responding to China's growing relations with Nigeria?* China's connection with Latin America and the United States' response to this is discussed first, with the aim of identifying indicators and formulating an expectation. Data is collected from news sources, magazine articles and governmental and institutional reports and websites. Through data analysis it is found that the European Union and the United States are concerned about China's relationship with Nigeria. Therefore, both are setting up programs, projects and initiatives to compete with China for a relationship with the Giant of Africa. However, the lack of high-level presidential visits by Western leaders to Nigeria is causing skepticism.

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Table of Contents

<i>Introduction and problem statement</i>	5
<i>Theoretical discussion</i>	7
China in Latin America and the Caribbean	7
The United States' response	9
China in Africa	10
Conceptual framework	11
<i>Methodology</i>	13
Data analysis and case selection	13
Data collection.....	15
Data quality.....	15
<i>Findings and analysis</i>	17
Military relations	17
I. China in Nigeria.....	17
II. The US' response to China's military in Nigeria.....	18
III. Analysis.....	19
Political - economic relations	20
I. China in Nigeria.....	20
II. The West's response	22
III. Analysis.....	25
<i>Conclusion</i>	26
<i>Reference list</i>	28
<i>Appendix A (Codebook)</i>	48
<i>Appendix B (Data sources)</i>	60

Introduction and problem statement

Africa is the continent where language is thought to be originated from. The first structured peace pact was made in 1100 B.C. and was between Egypt and the King of the Hittites (Spies, 2018). Therefore, Africa is perceived as the “birthplace of diplomacy” (p. 1). Until around the mid-20th century, many African countries were colonised by Western states, such as the United Kingdom and France. This changed at the end of the 1950s, when Africa increasingly opposed imperialism and the costs two World Wars made it impossible for the Europeans to maintain their colonies overseas. For Nigeria, independence came in 1960 (Umezurike, 2012).

With Nigeria having the biggest economy and being the continent’s largest oil producer, therefore being of great interest to China, it makes an interesting case to research. In addition, the “Giant of Africa” on its own already has some influence over other countries on the continent, so intensifying the bilateral relation with Nigeria could be a strategy of China to exert more international control (Chivvis *et al.*, 2023).

Western nations put strict conditions on loans and aid, and thus, China formed an attractive partner who has a reputation for respecting “other cultures and states” (Maru, 2019; Ajibo *et al.*, 2020; Madueke *et al.*, 2018). Yet, as Carmody (2020) describes, there is a “moral panic” among Western states about China’s growing presence in the world economy (p. 24). This growing economic power is gradually translating into a desire to play a leading role in global politics (Abudllahi & Phiri, 2019). China forms a challenge the liberal structure of the international system, but it cannot build this new global order without the support of Africa (Nantulya, 2023). While the theory of “debt-trap diplomacy” has not been proven, as intentionality by China cannot properly be verified, China is lending record sums to African countries, the height being in 2016 with 28.4 billion dollars (Bavier & Savage, 2023; Carmody, 2020). Since Beijing’s and Washington’s interests in are often opposing each other, the US are unnerved by this development (Thompson, 2005). The protrusion of liberal values onto developing countries, gave African societies a feeling of neo-colonialism,

whereas China sells the idea of a “South-South cooperation” (Asante, 2018, p. 261). China has exploited the anti-Western sentiments of countries like Nigeria to make itself more attractive as a counter partner for investments, trade and political alliances (Tull, 2006). Thus, the interesting element of the competition between the West and China is that is not merely an economic rivalry, but it is also a clash of ideologies (Friedberg, 2018).

There is increasing talk on a “new Cold War”, because while America wants to maintain its hegemonic state, China is growing as a global player (Zhao, 2019; Winkler, 2023). Because the US and China are both global players, their actions, whether confrontation or cooperation, have international consequences. This research does not aim to answer the question if there is going to be another Cold War. Instead, this research investigates whether, “the narrowing power gap” caused by China’s rise is handled actively or accepted passively by the West (Zhao, 2019, p. 393). This will be done through a single case study, to examine whether a rivalry exists between the powerhouses for international influence. This has led to the following research question: *How is the West responding to China’s growing relations with Nigeria?*

Theoretical discussion

To construct a theoretical framework, literature on China's presence in Latin America and the Caribbean will be studied, followed by a discussion on the way in which the United States have responded to this development. It focuses on the actions of only the US, since it is happening in Washington's backyard. Second, literature on China in Africa will be discussed to understand the ways in which Beijing tries to pursue control in the region. Finally, the conceptual framework will explain the definition and subcategories of the variables and their indicators.

China in Latin America and the Caribbean

To start, China's growing presence in another region will be examined: Latin America and the Caribbean. Historically, China and countries in South America did not have a particular close relationship with one another. But recently, China has made its way into the region and "has become the largest trading partner for all of the major economies in the region except Mexico" (Chen, 2021, p. 112). Expanding its economic connections to other regions in the world is a strategy of Beijing to reduce dependency on the US. With a growing economy, China needs the natural resources to keep up with this. Therefore, it aims to build partnerships with regions elsewhere, like South- and Central America to gain access to vital resources (Wise & Chonn Ching, 2018). While Latin America is far from the biggest economic partner, China's trade relations are rapidly growing (Jenkins, 2012). Cooperation projects between China and Latin America have grown with the foundation of the China-CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) Forum (Chen, 2021). Beside trade, economic ties also come in the form of infrastructure investments, like canals, railways and technological development, aid and loans (Niu, 2015). These financial flows are received with open arms, with 21 countries having already joined the Belt and Road Initiative (Lazarus & Berg, 2022).

China is an important economic partner for Latin American countries, among other things, for trade and development. In addition, Beijing's military alliance with the region is becoming more intense (Lazarus & Berg, 2022). Since the beginning of the decade, over 200 visits have been made by China's military, the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Moreover, Chinese soldiers train in the South American jungle, while Latinx personnel receives military education from the PLA (Ellis, 2020). Also, arms trade deals with China have increased

significantly (Gurrola, 2018). Military cooperation is not the main tool through which countries exert power over other nations (Berg, 2024). Yet combined with economic and political influence, it can be used to gain support for Beijing's policy and keep the United States away from the region (Lazarus & Berg, 2022; Ellis, 2020).

Thus, politics play an important role in Latin America's relationship with China (Wise & Chonn Ching, 2018). China does not only obtain political relations through strategic partnerships. Taiwan, or the Republic of China (ROC), is a major determinant of how Beijing deals with another country (Shinn & Eisenman, 2020). Between 1949 and 1980, a diplomatic war started between the PRC and ROC for recognition by South and Central American countries. Additionally, Beijing tried to stir up radical socialists and communists (Wise & Chonn Ching, 2018). Nonetheless, economic and political relations have often gone hand in hand. Jenkins (2012) has pointed out the influence of the diplomatic recognition of Taiwan to financial flows to Latin American countries in the shape of trade, FDI and aid. It was not until 2007 that the first country in Central America changed its diplomatic relations from Taiwan to China (Rivera-Matias, 2022). The switch of recognition was not taken out of ideological considerations. Rather, by supporting the PRC, Costa Rica's government hoped to improve its economy and become attractive for (Chinese) foreign direct investment, and since 2018, other countries have followed for the same reason (Rivera-Matias, 2022).

Between 2013 and 2023, President Xi Jinping has visited the continent over ten times, signing bilateral agreements with some of the biggest economies, giving them the title of "strategic partner" (Roy, 2023). Strategic partnerships play an important role in China's international game plan as it will forge a bond between Beijing and nations that are of geopolitical importance (Lei & Sui, 2022; Michalski, 2019). This partnership is sold as a 'win-win' situation. In the case of Latin America, China hopes to gain access to valuable natural resources, food, export markets and technology (Ellis, 2017). In turn, states hope to achieve economic growth, poverty reduction and access to scarce products, like medical supplies and capital (Ellis, 2017; Roy, 2023). The definition of strategic partnerships by Michalski (2019) involves a primary focus on "privileged bilateral relations" (p. 6).

Evidently, the literature on the relationship between Latin America and China demonstrates the growing involvement of China on an economic, political and military level. The following section will research the way in which the US and EU respond to these

developments. Language like “a new Cold War” and “power competition” have come up with the emergence of China as global player (Winkler, 2023, p. 333). Even more, since 2017, the United States considers China as a “strategic competitor”, referring to a dynamic in which both some parties try to maintain the current order, while others want to adjust it. To achieve their goal, the countries compete against each other in various spheres, yet also are aware that they benefit from a partnership (Paul *et al.*, 2022). Through both mutual interests and colliding principles, the relationship is on a “spectrum that runs from cooperation through competition and to conflict of varying intensities” (p. vi).

The United States’ response

While Trump skipped the Organisation of American States’ (OSA) summit in 2018, planned to cut funding to the organisation drastically, and acted hostile towards immigrants from South American countries, Biden promised to restore its relationship with Latin America after entering the presidential office (Council on Foreign Relations, 2022). President Biden (and during his time as Vice President) “has long argued that the United States should renew its leadership role in the region to counter a rising China” (Roy, 2023). Besides engaging in political talks with Venezuela and Cuba, countries whose relationship with the US suffered greatly, the Biden administration also added an extra 240 million dollars of aid on top of the standard OSA-budget to support Latin American states in 2022. Although the ties between America and its southern neighbours go way back, Biden’s decision to affirm the US’ dedication to the continent is significant. In 2015, President Xi Jinping showed a big sign of interest in the region with a \$500 billion investment (Council on Foreign Relations, 2022). Moreover, in 2021 China and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) published the Joint Action Plan to intensify cooperation and “create eight new forums that focus on topics including space and digital technology (Council on Foreign Relations, 2022). A few months later, another announcement was made that CELAC and Beijing will start working together on infrastructure development. As a response to China’s international developmental projects, the G7 put the Build Back Better World in place to build roads in developing countries (Roy, 2023). However, this project has not been deemed very successful, in part due to a lack of proper funding. Politically, the United States has tried to woo Latin American and Caribbean states by hosting them personally at the White House and making state visits to the area with the aim of countering China (Bade, 2023; Hawkins, 2023; Holland & Shalal, 2023). Additionally, “the Biden administration has sought to shore

up support for Taiwan” and “raise concerns about Huawei” (Council on Foreign Relations, 2023). Finally, the US wants to maintain its security relationship with Latin America by strengthening its mission to counter criminal activities through multilateral organisations, federal initiatives and programmes and substantial aid donations (Shifter, 2012).

China in Africa

Financial interactions between China and Africa are driven by both the needs of African countries and the interests of Chinese donors. Despite Africa's significant economic progress, becoming the second-fastest-growing region globally, it still struggles with political and economic instability, corruption, inadequate infrastructure, unemployment, and poverty (African Development Bank Group, 2024). National governments often lack the funds or face obstacles from powerful elites, prompting Chinese multinational corporations (MNCs) and government institutions to step in with necessary capital (De Freitas, 2023). Chinese loans and investments are often more attractive due to their more favourable terms, with less conditions, lower interest rates and longer repayment periods (Pannell, 2008). China is also a very important export market for natural resources and a small quantity of manufactured goods (Madueke *et al.*, 2018).

According to Pannell (2008), there are three main motivations for China to send so much funding to Africa: (1) access to natural resources, (2) Africa provides a market opportunity for China’s manufactured goods and (3) support for its foreign policy objectives (mainly the One-China policy). China’s engagement with Africa was initially mainly politically motivated. China tried to gain support from African countries to obtain a seat in the United Nations, rather than Taiwan (Kironka, 2022). Later, it was seen as a step for its “Going Global strategy” that was meant to put China back on the world stage (Cheung *et al.*, 2012, p. 204). Now, investment directions are largely driven by the need for natural resources. Additionally, China seeks markets for its products and job creation opportunities for its vast population, often bringing Chinese workers for overseas projects. To become a superpower, since China needs to become an economic imperium first (Pannell, 2008).

China’s relationship with Africa is seen as mutually beneficial, yet there are growing concerns about potential neo-colonialism (Carmody *et al.*, 2022). Issues include job losses for Africans due to imported Chinese workers and the inability of local businesses to compete with cheap Chinese goods. China's foreign policy also does not prioritize democratization,

potentially supporting autocratic regimes and reducing the effectiveness of democracy conditions tied to Western loans (Tull, 2006; Li, 2017).

Conceptual framework

In order to study the response of the West towards China's relations with Nigeria, these relations must be conceptualised first. As will be justified later, two links will be studied: political-economic association and military relations. The conceptual framework addresses the analytical boundaries of the variables and clarify how the key concepts will be identified in the data.

The independent variable is China's relations with Nigeria. The literature about China's effect on African countries is vast. The general conclusion that is drawn from these studies is that Beijing is impacting Africa enormously in various ways (Chen, 2016; Bodomo, 2019). China's relations with Nigeria will be examined first, by looking at the indicators identified by Chen (2016) and Schoeman (2007). Schoeman (2007) argues that, to become a hegemon, the state must "have superlative economic, military and political power" (p. 78). While China has not explicitly said it wants to become the sole superpower in a unipolar hegemonic system, it is pursuing a system of multipolarity. Those disciplines are considered key to achieve this (Chen, 2016). This study will therefore investigate how China is growing its political-economic and its military proximity in Nigeria. Subsequently, the West's response to these developments will be discussed. The same indicators will be used: political-economic relations and military cooperation (Mawdsley, 2007).

To systematically analyse the data, the concepts need to be accurately defined. To start, 'economic relations' will be considered as a political-economic term, following the concept of economic diplomacy. Economic diplomacy describes a crossroad of economics and politics, whereby a state uses political resources to advance its national economy and economic means are employed to "increase the political stability of the nation" (Okano-Heijmans, 2011, p. 17). Therefore, the economic and political relations will be considered as one element (political-economic), rather than two separate components. Five tools have been identified as indicators of political-economic relations. There is (1) commercial diplomacy, (2) trade diplomacy, (3) financial diplomacy, (4) inducements, and (5) sanctions (p. 20). To determine commercial and trade diplomacy, the encouragement of trading and investing will be

examined. Sanctions include embargo and boycotts and inducements are dictated through aid, loans, grants, debt relief, and sharing technology. Lastly, financial diplomacy involves rules regarding exchange rates and purchasing or selling government assets (Okano-Heijmans). These tools have been merged into three new indicators, see *table 1* and *table 2*.

Next, Military relations are expressed by the collaboration of military forces and by cooperation through the exchange of supplies, strategies and information (Akpuru, 2003). Through arms trade deals, donating armed forces or supplies to the government, or in some cases insurgents, and building naval or air bases states aim to reach mutual security and benefits. Lastly, “the education and training of foreign military personnel”, usually in international military academies is a tool to grow an armed alliance (Nantulya, 2023, p. 2).

The dependent variable is ‘the West’s response’. During this research, the West consists of the United States and the European Union. The US has already labelled China as strategic competitor, and the two powers are in a trade war since 2018. The European Union, however, wants a more ‘balanced relationship’ with Beijing, because the organisation realises the need for collaboration on global issues (European Union External Action, 2020). Nonetheless, in recent years the EU has observed China’s growing expansionist and undemocratic character and has developed concerns about these values that are being promoted overseas, especially in developing countries. The widening gap between governmental norms in combination with China’s refusal to lower certain trade barriers, has resulted in growing competition between Beijing and Brussels (European Union External Action, 2020). Therefore, the study will research the actions of the two Western powerhouses together, regarding China’s relations with Nigeria.

Based on the developments in Latin America as described in the literature review, and the conceptualisation of the variables, the expectation for this study is that as China’s relations with Nigeria are becoming more intense, the West will respond with actions that strengthen its own relationship with Nigeria by expanding its investments in the country, facilitating trade opportunities, promoting its political-economic values and upscaling the military presence or arms supplies.

Methodology

Data analysis and case selection

To research the question of how the West is responding to China's growing relations with Nigeria, this study will employ a qualitative method. The study involves latent content, focusing on motives and purposes. Therefore, content analysis, rather than discourse analysis, is suitable. As Heath and Halperin (2020) describe, QCA is "generally more sensitive to the context in which texts are produced, and better able to tell us about meanings, norms, values, motives and purposes" (p. 376). Matters related to diplomacy are often symbolic and normative practices, context is therefore very important in understanding the data (Faizullaev, 2018). The research design is a single case study. The case studied is Nigeria, who is an important trade partner for both China, the United States and Europe. The strength of a single case study is that "by focusing on a single case, that case can be intensively examined" (Halperin & Heath, 2020, p. 234). A good study has a strong internal validity, because through vigorous analysis of one sample, in this case a country, meaningful deduction can be made. Nigeria has been picked as a critical case, because the objective is to analyse the West's response to China-Nigeria relations, regarding the military, political and economic realm, based on studies that have been done on similar developments in Latin America. *Table 1* and *Table 2* give an overview on the sub-categories (economic, political and military relations) and their indicators.

Table 1.

Operationalisation of China's relationship with Nigeria

Frame	Definition	Indicators	Example
Political-economic relations	"The interconnection between national economies" (Hirst & Thompson, 1992, p. 358)	Trade deals/policies (technological or digital) infrastructure	"In what could best be described as a major milestone for Nigeria at the ongoing Belt and Road Initiative Forum (BRI) in Beijing, China has committed to refinancing and completing the Abuja-Kano and Port-Harcourt-Maiduguri railway projects" (Nkwocha, 2023).
		Loans	

Military relations	The cooperation of Arms deals to military forces and trade or donate strategies between military states (Akpuru, 2003).	"Even as Nigeria relies on the United States in these areas, it depends on China as its top source of arms. Nigeria gets some weapons from the United States, but its difficulties with Leahy vetting have led Abuja to turn to China as an alternative supplier. In 2021, China accounted for over one-third of Nigeria's arms imports, while the United States accounted for only about two percent" (Chivvis <i>et al.</i> , 2023).
	Building military bases abroad	
	Providing military education	

Table 2.

Operationalisation of the West's response

Frame	Indicators	Example
Political-economic relations	Trade deals/policies	"Abuja may now turn to European lenders to finance its infrastructure needs. In any event, the United States remains Nigeria's largest foreign investor, although most of the investments are concentrated in the oil and gas sector" (Chivvis <i>et al.</i> , 2023).
	Investments in (technological or digital) infrastructure	
	Aid and loans	

Military relations	Arms deals to trade or donate military supplies	“The Defense Department must enhance its engagement with Beijing’s target nations to offer those countries the United States as a stronger economic and security partner,” he said (Rep. Rob Wittman, 2023, as cited in Lendon & McCarthy, 2023).
	Building military bases abroad	
	Providing military education	

Data collection

The collected data comes from primary and secondary sources. Economic, military and political relations are analysed through policy documents from the European Commission and the United States. Moreover, press releases by the Nigerian and Chinese government will provide their statements on cooperation efforts. Besides quotes from government officials found in policies and official state websites, institutional reports, think-tanks, magazines and newspaper articles will be studied as well. To comprehend the contexts of these meetings, sources that contain background information and the context of certain actions or rhetoric are examined as well. This data is derived from scientific and institutional reports. The mix of quotes by presidents and government officials and independent observers will provide a credible and broad-ranged collection of data for the findings and analysis, see Appendix B. The timeframe in which data is selected ranges from the early 2000s up and till 2024. The political-economic relations between China and Nigeria and the West and Nigeria that are studied here are the ones after 2000, when the Chinese government announced its “Going Global strategy” and therefore entered the world stage (Cheung *et al.*, 2012, p. 204). Most articles related to this subject have been published within the last five years. The China-Nigeria military cooperation was announced in 2013, and the sources are also from the last five years (Campbell, 2013).

Data quality

For the results to be trustworthy, the data must deal with validity and reliability. Reliability points to “how accurately we have measured our indicator” (Halperin & Heath, 2020, p. 191).

To ensure this, a coding frame has been constructed to create a coding-routine for the different categories. This codebook is included in the study to establish transparency and credibility (see Appendix A). Validity refers to whether the indicators are fit to measure the associated variable (Halperin & Heath, 2020). There are several ways in which validity can be assessed, but this research focuses on construct validity, which “examines how well the measure conforms to our theoretical expectations by examining the extent to which it is associated with other theoretically relevant factors” (p.190). The indicators used for the Nigerian case have come to light through the analysis of another case: Latin America. Because of the single case, internal validity is high. However, external validity is generally lacking when analysing a singular country, since the information is specific to that one country. Nonetheless, through careful considerations, hypothetical assumptions about other regions can be made as well (Halperin & Heath, 2020).

Findings and analysis

Military relations

I. China in Nigeria

Nigeria faces various national security challenges (Tanko, 2021). The country struggles with religious extremism, i.e. the terrorist attacks by Boko Haram. There are also deadly clashes between farmers and herders over land use. Moreover, villages are raided and destroyed by criminals who are known for kidnapping civilians, which forces people to flee. In the south-east region of the country, the military collides with indigenous groups who want to separate from the national government and form their own sovereign nation. Lastly, in the Niger Delta, security issues have been around for decades. The presence of valuable oil has instigated fights by militants to obtain a larger share of the profits. They attack security forces of the companies and governments that operate in that area (Tanko, 2021). In addition to internal problems, the Nigerian army is one of the prominent parties in peacekeeping missions across various countries, e.g. Iraq, Liberia, Sudan, Somalia and Bosnia Herzegovina (Abdulwaheed, 2012). A strong and capable military force is therefore important.

In 2013, China and Nigeria announced that they would start working together to combat terrorism and other areas of security (Campbell, 2013). In the pledge, China committed to the provision of military hardware and a factory to produce aircraft parts. The military cooperation between Abuja and Washington was hindered due to the US' Leahy laws, which "prohibit the U.S. government from providing assistance or training to members of a unit of any nation's security forces that has perpetuated a gross violation of human rights with impunity" (McNerney *et al.*, 2017, p. ix). The Nigerian government has been accused of this exact act, resulting in a hold on American weapons going to Nigeria in 2021 (Oladipo & Stone, 2021). Additionally, since the invasion of Ukraine, Nigeria has not been able to obtain as much Russian military support.

Therefore, Abuja turned to China for help. With the decrease of both Russian and American supplies, China grew enormously as a partner. In 2021, "China accounted for over one-third of Nigeria's arms imports, while the United States accounted for only about two percent" (Chivvis *et al.*, 2023). In the last 3 to 4 years, Nigeria acquired almost 300 military vehicles, including tanks, from China. In addition to that, drones and aircraft parts are prime trading commodities (Sheehan, 2024; "Chinese", 2024). Besides presenting a new supplier when

others fail, China provides two other huge benefits for Nigeria: it is significantly cheaper than American equipment, although at the cost of quality, and China's non-interference policy makes the provision of resources not dependable on Nigeria's democratic score (Abdullahi, 2022). In July 2023, China docked warships in Lagos for several days, "saying the visit is aimed at enhancing maritime security in the region" (Bartlett, 2023). China already has a naval base in East Africa (Djibouti) and ships carrying oil have been targeted by pirates in the past, so while it is not a total surprise that China wants to stabilise other trade regions, the West has raised concerns about expansionist intentions (Bartlett, 2023).

II. The US' response to China's military in Nigeria

The threat of Islamic extremism by Boko Haram and ISIS in Nigeria, has resulted in a military partnership between the United States and Nigeria (Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, 2024). Washington provides military support and has engaged in arms deals with Abuja (Sheehan, 2024). Military education programs and counterterrorism alliances are part of this military relationship. The data indicates that China's rising military power has prompted Nigeria to move away from Western human rights standards and instead accept China's defense supplies, which come without any conditions (Chivvis *et al.*, 2023). Halting the approval of arms sales to Nigeria due to concerns over human rights violations, led to a closer military alliance between Abuja and Beijing. Considering this development, it is notable that in April of 2022, the US Congress approved the distribution of weapons after all (Lee, 2022; Ali, 2022). According to the State Department, this consent came after officials expressed their worries about China's role as provider for Africa and realised that a stable Africa would benefit US security (Lee, 2022). The Western military products are generally of higher quality and easier to operationalise, therefore they are received with open arms, even if China offers cheaper ones (Abdullahi, 2022). China has not explicitly mentioned plans to build a naval base in West Africa, but the West, and particularly America, is concerned after the event with the Warships in Nigeria in 2022 (Bartlett, 2023). Hereafter, the commander of US Africa Command told the House of Representatives that Beijing is looking for a place to build another military base, but this time on the West coast (Lendon & McCarthy, 2023). China's growing naval presence in the world, has led members of Congress to advise the Department of Defense to "enhance its engagement with Beijing's target nations" (Rep. Rob Wittman, 2023, as cited in Lendon & McCarthy, 2023). In response to this growing distress, the Secretary of State, Mr Blinken, visited four nations in West Africa

earlier this year: Angola, Cape Verde, Ivory Coast and Nigeria (Hansler, 2024). All these countries are located along the Atlantic Coast.

In addition to the state visits aimed at strengthening its bilateral security relations with Nigeria, the US also cooperates with Abuja through multilateral security programs. Between 2019 and 2023, the US funded military training to Nigeria with a \$5 million dollar budget. An extra half a million dollars has been spent since 2016 for a military education program. For counterterrorism and maritime security, the US allocated 1.8 million dollars for Nigeria (Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, 2024). In 2023, the US sold Attack Helicopters to Nigeria for almost \$1 billion dollars. But on top of that, Washington also added \$25 million dollars to train the Nigerian army in using the equipment and “developing target processes that are legally compliant with International Humanitarian Law” (Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, 2024). Furthermore, through America’s Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP), Nigeria was assigned \$8 million dollars for training, materials and other sorts of support for the past five years (Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, 2019).

III. Analysis

Regarding China’s military expansion in Nigeri, the United States is worried. With being focused elsewhere and having strict ethic laws, Nigeria has reason to question America’s devotion to fostering security and safety for the Nigerian people. Moreover, after Blinken’s visit to Africa in 2023, it became clear that one very important thing was missing in America’s relationship with Africa: a presidential visit (Crowley, 2024). Back in 2022, President Biden promised to travel the continent within a year. While the secretary of state has made multiple trips to Africa, “it cannot erase the disappointment of Biden’s unfulfilled promise to African leaders” (Adetayo, 2024).

The developments regarding China’s military proliferation are quite recent, therefore steadfast laws and policies by the American government on this subject are not in play yet. Several government employees have gone on record saying that they are worried, and that the country should certainly upscale its commitment to Nigeria, therefore, assertive legislations and actions are to be expected. Mr Blinken has not said that his trip was to compete with Beijing for influence, yet the timing, only a few days after Chinese officials made a visit and

a few months after the docking of warships, could suggest that America has realised it needs to maintain closer ties with West Africa, otherwise someone else will fill its shoes. It is noteworthy that, during his trip, the Secretary made a sneer saying that while the United States genuinely wants West Africa to grow, some countries burden others with unbearable debt, who bring in their own workers, instead of supporting the local population (Crowley, 2024). These worries have already led to the deployment of weapons that were initially put on hold due to alleged humanitarian violations by the Nigerian army. Although Chivvis *et al.* (2023) found that the US only accounted for two percent of the arms supplies to Nigeria, the country provides various extra services through the Foreign Military Sales. Even more, TSCTP does not only provide armed services, but it also institutionalises counterterrorism activities, improve citizen cooperation and aims to enable cooperation among the participating countries to tackle terrorism and criminal activities (Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, 2019). These acts of assistance can still make the US a stable security partner.

Political - economic relations

I. China in Nigeria

China has proven to be economically significant for Nigeria. Between 2003 and 2019, trade increased from \$1.2 billion to \$13.7 billion, and investments rose by almost \$100 billion. Simultaneously, trade with the United States decreased by 4 billion dollars (Tobi Oshodi, 2022). In 2022, China exported over 12 billion US dollars to the Giant of Africa, while Nigeria exported 1.56 billion to China (OEC, n.d.). For Nigeria, China is the largest market of its exports, accounting for 5.1% of its total exports world-wide in 2020 (Saibu, 2023). In Sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria poses as the biggest export market for Chinese products, which are mostly manufactured goods. Adversely, China mainly imports petroleum from Nigeria (OEC, n.d.). Over the past decades, China and Nigeria have worked on fostering their economic relationship, both bilaterally and through multilateral organisations. Multilaterally, there are three important structures for trading, investing, and lending: (1) Forum for China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), (2) Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and (3) the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (Ezeani & Ngoka, 2022; Badamasi & Tayo, 2023).

To begin, FOCAC is the framework that facilitates cooperation between China and African countries, including Nigeria. It was setup in 2000, by Beijing and has been organised eight

times since then (Nwankwo & Okoye, 2023). It was designed to formalise relations between China and Africa, in addition to already existing bilateral relations. It also provides another way through which China helps fund African countries. The forum is generally considered as the principal way of doing business between the states. In 2018, more African countries joined the FOCAC Summit than the United Nations General Assembly (Nantulya, 2021). At the summit in 2018, Nigeria agreed to “closer connection in policy, infrastructure, trade, finance and people-to-people ties” (Shehu, 2018). Beijing agreed to finance Nigeria’s ICT sector, worth \$328 million. This is on top of the 5-billion-dollar fund that China opened in 2015, from which countries in Africa can withdraw money to pay for the construction of infrastructure (Shehu, 2018). However, an analysis of the FOCAC summits of the past few years shows a decrease in China’s funding. At the 2018 meeting, Beijing promised 60 million dollars to Africa (Sow, 2018). But in 2021, when the Coronavirus was still very much present, China’s offer decreased to \$40 million (Lau & Moens, 2022). Questions also arise whether the cooperation between China and African countries is truly equal. For years, the trade balance has been negative, hurting African economies, while China is profiting. A lack of governmental transparency and human rights standards are also hurdles in Sino-African relations (Nantulya, 2021). Investments in Africa by Beijing also fell after the peak in 2016. This does not mean that China has abandoned African countries, as it donated 1.2 billion vaccines to Africa during the pandemic (Lau & Moens, 2022).

China’s Belt and Road Initiative is based worldwide, including Africa. In 2018, Nigeria signed up for it as well, and since then, BRI provides the African country with much needed infrastructure and other investments (Bandeled 2023; Chivvis *et al.* 2023). In terms of infrastructure, the Lekki Deep Sea Port mentioned above is a prime example of a Belt and Road Initiative. The Abuja-Masaka light rail, which is over 45 kilometres long, was built with a \$500 million loan from China and built by China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (Dzirutwe, 2024; Dollar, 2019). Other railway projects include those connecting Kaduna and Kano, Marina-Iddo-Okomaiko Lagos Light Rail Project, and lines linking Lagos to Calabar, Kano and Ibadan (Bandeled, 2023). Moreover, Xi Jinping’s BRI has developed the construction of airport terminals and energy projects, like the hydroelectric plants in Zungeru and Kaduna, financed by China EXIM bank (Bandeled, 2023). Besides physical infrastructure projects, investments in digital networks have spurred (Kynge, 2023). Last year, Chinese companies launched an app that makes it possible for Nigerians to pay cashless. Moreover, Chinese smart-phone manufacturers are becoming more present. Together with companies

that are linking Nigeria on a 5G network and deploying communication satellites (Bande, 2023). According to Nigeria's National Integrated Investment Master Plan (Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning, 2020), the government has signed multiple Memorandum of Understandings with Chinese corporations. Power China Limited is now involved in national projects, like the transfer of water from the Congo River to Lake Chad and the China Geological Surveys and Shandong Mineral Exploration Agency have signed an additional Technical Cooperation Agreement to support the Nigerian Geological Survey Agency in mining.

Lastly, the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). It is not a trade agreement with China, instead it is a way for African countries to trade without barriers, "create a single market for goods, services, facilitated by movement of persons" (African Union, n.d.). Nigeria signed the agreement in 2019, after careful considerations due to potential losses, such as increased international competition and the dumping of goods (Olapede & Onyekwena, 2021). At face value, the agreement would pose a challenge to China, as African countries start trading more with each other, rather than boosting intercontinental partnerships. Moreover, it shifts Nigeria's economic focus on the manufacturing sector (Badamasi & Tayo, 2023). But China is expected to gain from the trade deal. Beijing owns many production companies in Nigeria, therefore, an increase in demand for manufactured goods, will surge investments in and profits for Chinese businesses (Badamasi & Tayo, 2023). In turn, since Chinese workers are often imported to work in these factories, the national economy is bolstered as well. Additionally, Chinese-built infrastructure is profiting from the free trade agreement. The Lekki Deep Sea Port, which is for 75% financed by Beijing, through "competitive transshipment, and status upgrade as the maritime hub of West Africa" (David-Arinze, 2023). The project cost around 800 million US dollars, an investment split between two Chinese companies (52.5% and 22.5%), the Lagos state government (20%) and the Nigerian ports authority (5%). The estimation is that the return on investment is over 200 percent due to trade expansion, resulting in massive gains for China.

II. The West's response

It is argued that the West has been losing Africa to Beijing, because the West's focus is elsewhere (Crowley, 2024; Dambre, 2023). Therefore, it is interesting to look at the initiatives the West has come up with since China's increasing presence in Nigeria.

The European Union is trying to butter up to Nigeria with favourable migration policies and humanitarian assistance, to improve their economic ties and gain access to energy sources to “constrain China” (Barigazzi, 2023). First, in 2021, the European Union published a funding scheme, the Multi-annual Indicative Program (MIP) that covers investments in Nigeria between 2021 and 2027 (Directorate-General for International Partnerships, 2021). In the document, the EU acknowledges the importance of Nigeria in achieving political stability, economic growth and security in the whole of West-Africa. It outlines several sectors which Europe is going to boost through funds. For the period 2021-2024, the EU has allocated 508 million dollars. The budget for the remaining years will be announced after a review in 2024. The sectors of interest sustainable agriculture, digital development, maritime and human security, education and health care (pp. 4-5).

To counter China’s Belt and Road Initiative in Africa, the European Union established Global Gateway (Verhelst & Wax, 2024). This is a strategy to enhance its relationship with various countries, including Nigeria. Last year, the EU announced it entered an agreement, through Global Gateway, with the Nigerian Minister of Budget and Economic Planning for a 900-million-euro package to initiate several projects regarding (digital) infrastructure, energy and education (Directorate-General for International Partnerships, 2023). Furthermore, Brussels has expressed concerns about China’s construction of digital infrastructure in Nigeria. As a result, the EU invested in a submarine fibre cable along the Atlantic Ocean, connecting itself with African states (Lau & Moens, 2022). In April 2024 the EU agreed to a fund of 18 million euros to help Nigeria with research and development for its national plan to improve the production of vaccines and other medical innovations (Directorate-General for International Partnerships, 2024).

The concern among Americans about declining trade with Africa is justified. In 2019, China held more than twice as much of the export shares from Sub-Saharan Africa than the US, while in 2001 the US received 19 percent of the exports from the region and China less than 3 percent (Runde & Ramanujam, 2022; Runde *et al.*, 2018). Consequently, it is no surprise that the US has been putting in effort to re-connect, especially with countries that contain useful natural resources or are geopolitically important, like Nigeria.

To start, a very important example of how politics and economic relations overlap, is that of America's African Growth and Opportunity Act (Bureau of African Affairs, n.d.). This legislation was set up in 2000 and was designed to strengthen its ties to Sub-Saharan countries through economic exchanges. The AGOA encourages the inclusion of women in African businesses and in talks at the AGOA annual forum (Bureau of African Affairs, n.d.). In 2019, Nigeria was the top exporter under AGOA at \$3.1 billion, according to the *2020 Biennial Report on the Implementation of the African Growth and Opportunity Act* (U.S. Trade Representative, 2020). The political element can be found in the eligibility criteria. In addition to economic criteria like omission of trade and investment barriers with the US and a market-based economy, political norms such as anti-corruption policies, human rights protection and political pluralism must also be met for a country to qualify. A country does not need to have a perfect record regarding these benchmarks. The report (2020) mentions that Nigeria ranked as 131/190 for doing business, 146/180 in 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index and 158th out of a 190 regarding the Human Development Index. Nonetheless, because of its willingness to improve, the US has allowed Abuja to join the AGOA.

US government officials have confirmed that the US Export-Import Bank (EXIM) and the International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) are being used to initiate partnerships with other countries to compete with China (Assessing U.S. efforts to counter China's coercive Belt and Road diplomacy, 2023). The US is fostering cooperation with developing countries through this bank, which can be aimed at making them less dependent on Chinese investments. Recently, EXIM signed a MoU with the Nigerian Bank of Industry to facilitate trade and investments between the US and Nigeria regarding sustainability, infrastructure, small businesses and creative sectors (EXIM, 2024). Moreover, in 2022 the International DFC allocated \$280 million to a Nigerian Bank to develop women-led businesses and small enterprises, especially in companies that are not in the oil-sector (Development Finance Corporation, 2022).

Lastly, the United States channels funds through its Agency for International Development (USAID). USAID to Nigeria has increased massively over the years. In the 2003 report on Results Review and Resource Request, it was noted that the USAID Nigeria budget grew from 24 million dollars in 1999 to a 100 million dollars in 2000, the same year FOCAC was established (USAID, 2003). In 2022, the commitment grew even further, with a 1.2-billion-

dollar donation to support “economic development, education, democracy, health, energy and climate, humanitarian relief, security, and more” (Office of the Spokesperson, 2024).

III. Analysis

The EU’s MIP is a specific seven-year plan (2021-2027) to spend millions of euros into security, human development, and economic growth. Arguably most important is the Global Gateway, which is a counterplan to the BRI. Besides these two major rival-plans, the EU makes additional investments. Concerns about China’s infringement on Nigeria’s digital network, the European Union constructed a fibre cable to improve its connection. The United States’ counter to Sino-African economic relations is the AGAO, enacted in 2000 and includes Nigeria. Through this law, America tries to tie economic relations to political reform. US EXIM and the International DFC are other institutions that counter China’s economic relationship with Nigeria by partnering up with local businesses, thereby making them less dependent on Chinese funds. Another way in which the US supports Nigeria is through USAID, whose budget has quintupled since 1999.

In terms of budget, the US will not outshine Beijing, but by linking and investing in several components of the country, like democratisation and liberalisation, it can make itself appealing to African countries (“Beyond 2025”, 2024). Especially if these countries have an interest in transparency, accountability and democracy. It is important to note however, that Brussels and Washington have set up policies and projects to counter China’s plans, this does not make it a zero-sum game. Just because Nigeria chooses to accept China’s offer to build a port, does not take away the West’s chance to build a railway. Due to its colonial past, Nigeria will probably not react well to an ultimatum where it must pick one or the other. Therefore, where this or other research sees competition, Nigeria will more likely see opportunities.

Conclusion

This study's objective is to answer the research question: *How is the West responding to China's growing relations with Nigeria?* This was done through a qualitative, single-case study (Nigeria), whereby data sources included newspaper articles, magazine editorials, government websites and policies, and institutional reports. Backed up by information from the data collection, China's relations with Nigeria was established first. Then, the findings were discussed and analysed. It has been found that the West, consisting of the European Union and the United States, is already responding to China's expansion into Nigeria since the early 2000s. Militarily, only the United States was studied, which showed that, Washington has been upscaling its budget for various programs to supply arms, but it also tries to sweeten up to Nigeria by offering other security oriented services, like training, education, focusing on sustainable security through building a stable rule of law and citizen trust in the government. Regarding China's plans for naval base in West Africa, the US has only responded with concerned and resentful language, but it is likely that action will follow. The analysis of the political-economic relations shows that both Washington and Beijing are responding by increasing their investments in infrastructure in Nigeria. The EU is especially worried about Beijing imposition on Nigeria's digital networks and satellites. It has therefore acted by building its own fiber cable along the Atlantic coast. The EU announced that the Global Gateway project is a direct way to counterbalance China's Belt and Road Initiative. Brussels answer is thus assertive. The US has had the AGOA in place since 2000, is increasing the USAID budget to Nigeria yearly and declared that it has set up organizations to compete with Beijing for support of Nigeria's local entrepreneurs.

This research contains some weaknesses, that limit the validity of the results. First, this study is a single case study, meaning that the external validity is not very high. While study goes in-depth into Nigeria's situation, the results are not necessarily applicable to other states, especially if their political-economy is designed differently (non-republic, closed market or not based on natural resources). Conflict might also adjust the results. As a result, future research should explore different cases or work a comparative case study to see how these elements interfere into the way in which the West responds to China's growing relationship with African countries. Second, for some projects and plans, the EU or the US has explicitly mentioned it is a way to compete with China, or other emerging powers that do not share

their democratic values, like transparency and human rights standards. Others, however, cannot necessarily be regarded as a direct counteract, which can make it more complicated to analyse. Context is therefore an important component. This study has aimed to take context into account; however, further research into the circumstances surrounding EU and US policymaking toward both Nigeria and China will make the results more robust.

This research contains some weaknesses, that limit the reliability of the results. Thirdly, diplomatic talks often happen behind closed doors. Therefore, information on what exactly is discussed and clashes between countries' leaders are difficult to find. Moreover, the Chinese government is an autocratic regime and is well-known for not being transparent or honest about its arrangements with other states. Additionally, Nigeria is still dealing with corruption and a lack of transparency about wins, losses and policies is a recurring phenomenon. This study has included the contexts around statements and decisions to deal with these opaque circumstances. In order to convince Nigeria that the West is committed to strengthening their relationship, high-level diplomatic visits by the head of state (not just cabinet members) is a must.

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Appendix A (Codebook)

Independent variable: China's influence in Nigeria

Frame	Indicators	Quote
Political-economic relations	Trade deals/policies or joining Chinese-led (economic) organisations	“In what could best be described as a major milestone for Nigeria at the ongoing Belt and Road Initiative Forum (BRI) in Beijing, China has committed to refinancing and completing the Abuja-Kano and Port- Harcourt-Maiduguri railway projects” (Nkwocha, 2023).

Investments in
(technological or
digital) infrastructure

“Also, there is the China Ocean Shipping Group which is involved with the Olokola Deepwater Project; and a plethora of other firms handling power projects in the country, such as the construction of the 3.05GWs Mambilla hydroelectric power plant. This is being jointly executed by the China Gezhouba Group (CGGC; which is a subsidiary of CCECC), Sinohydro Corporation Limited, and the CGCOC (formerly CGC Overseas Construction). This massive power project is being 85% funded by the China EXIM bank” (Bandeke, 2023).

Loans

“According to former Vice President Yemi Osinbajo, China shows up where and when the West will not or is reluctant, as Africa needs the loans and the infrastructure, and China offers them” (David-Arinze, 2023).

Economically, Abuja is intertwined with both Washington and Beijing. Nigeria is the United States’ second-largest trading partner in Africa and eligible for U.S. trade benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act. But Abuja trades more with China than with the United States, importing the largest share—24 percent—of its commodities from China (Chivvis *et al.*, 2023).

“President Muhammadu Buhari says Nigeria’s partnership with China through the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) has resulted in the execution of vital infrastructure projects across the country, valued at over \$5 billion” (“Nigeria”, 2018).

“China is ready to continue working with Nigeria to push for more tangible outcomes of China-Nigeria and China-Africa Belt and Road

cooperation and help Nigeria and Africa realise industrialisation and agricultural modernisation. China stands ready to enhance personnel exchanges at all levels with Nigeria, to advance high-quality practical cooperation” (Jianchun, 2023).

“During his stay in Beijing, Vice President Shettima witnessed the signing of Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) between the National Agency for Science and Engineering Infrastructure and three Chinese partners, for new projects valued at \$2 billion, as well as letters of intent between the Chinese and Nigerian partners, for new projects and investments worth \$4 billion” (Jianchun, 2023).

“The Lekki Deep Sea Port seeks to position Nigeria for the big gains of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA), competitive transshipment, and status upgrade as the maritime hub of West Africa, but neighbouring local communities also want a share of this prosperity and protection against adverse sustainability and human rights issues. China provided 75 per cent financing for the project in addition to 20 per cent equity by the Lagos State Government, which came as the 90 hectares of land where the port sits today” (David-Arinze, 2023).

“The finance they offer helps Chinese companies win crucial contracts. For instance, Huawei, the Chinese telecommunications giant, is dominating the installation of 5G telecoms base stations after MTN, the South African mobile operator, chose to roll out 5G services in the country using Huawei equipment” (Kynge, 2023).

China’s presence on Nigeria’s coast is growing in any case; in January 2023, Nigeria opened the

Beijing-funded Lekki Deep Sea Port” (Chivvis *et al.*, 2023).

“At the Belt and Road Initiative Forum, China also committed to refinancing the completion of two rail projects that stalled due to a cut in China's funding commitments. China had earlier agreed to provide 85% of the financing for the rail projects” (Onuah, 2023).

“The agreements signed include vehicle assembly projects, solar products, vehicle design and production, drone technology transfer, clean energy utilisation and the development of an industrial park” (Onuah, 2023).

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“With the development of a communications and digital ecosystem in Nigeria over the past two decades, Chinese companies have been central to the building of infrastructure for these new technologies, while providing services for the novel digital highways of commerce, alongside the expansion of the Nigerian digital economy and its interwoven networks” (Bandeled, 2023).

“Nigeria borrowed \$500 million for Abuja-Masaka light rail; the terms are 20 years with 7 years' grace period and a fixed interest rate of 2.5%” (Dollar, 2019).

“Built by China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation at a cost of \$823 million, the railway network at present consists of 45.25 kilometres (28.12 miles) of track on two lines. When completed, there will be six lines and 292 kilometres of track” (Dzirutwe, 2024).

The Federal Ministry of Water Resources is currently reviewing studies on the proposed inter-basin water transfer from the Congo River Basin to the Lake Chad Basin. However, an MoU has been signed with the Power China Limited to conclude plans for the actualization of the project on the transfer of water from the Congo River (Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning, 2020, p. 107).

The Nigerian Geological Survey Agency (NGSA) has signed an MoU and Technical Cooperation Agreements with the China Geological Surveys, Shandong Mineral Exploration Agency and the National Office Hydrocarbons and Mines ‘ONHYM’ of Morocco. The collaborations were intended to leverage the expertise and state-of-the-art technologies of these organizations in assisting Nigeria to generate investor-friendly geoscience data (Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning, 2020, p. 119).

“At the summit, which attracted multiple benefits for Nigeria, members agreed to bind themselves to the Belt and Road Initiative of the Chinese government, which essentially seeks to promote collectively, among one another, extensive consultation, cooperation and ensure shared gains. Essentially, this translates into closer connection in policy, infrastructure, trade, finance and people-to-people ties. All members will share development opportunities and promote cultural exchanges” (Shehu, 2018).

		<p>“China has given other assistance though, promising 1 billion more coronavirus vaccines doses in November, on top of 200 million doses already delivered to African countries” (Lau & Moens, 2022).</p>
Military relations	Arms deals to trade or donate military supplies	<p>"Even as Nigeria relies on the United States in these areas, it depends on China as its top source of arms. Nigeria gets some weapons from the United States, but its difficulties with Leahy vetting have led Abuja to turn to China as an alternative supplier. In 2021, China accounted for over one-third of Nigeria’s arms imports, while the United States accounted for only about two percent” (Chivvis <i>et al.</i>, 2023).</p>
	Building military bases abroad	
	Providing military education	<p>Xi Jinping, China’s leader, has pledged more joint exercises and involvement in security problems. Officers from 50 countries in Africa take military-education courses offered by China. Among graduates of these courses are eight defence ministers and ten defence chiefs. (Nigeria’s General Musa is a graduate of both America’s Army War College and China’s National Defence University)” (“Chinese”, 2024).</p>
		<p>"China’s relatively affordable and accessible military hardware could easily appeal to countries like Nigeria and states across the Sahel seeking alternative markets for assets acquisition" (Abdullahi, 2022).</p>
		<p>“China has launched programmes that helped train Nigerian military and security personnel on areas of law and order, UN peacekeeping missions, fighting piracy and combating terrorism and supply of state-of-the-art equipment such as ICT, drones, patrol vessels and hardware” (Babatunde, 2023).</p>

“Both countries organised a joint naval exercise in July 2023 when three Chinese warships docked in Lagos for five days as a way to demonstrate partnership of equals in a new era and build stronger ties” (Babatunde, 2023).

“General Christopher Musa, the chief of Nigeria’s defence staff, has complained that Western suppliers are often unwilling to sell Nigeria the kit it wants to fight Boko Haram, a jihadist group known for enslaving schoolgirls. So it has turned to China, which has delivered almost 300 armoured vehicles since 2020, including vt-4 tanks as well as drones and fighters” (“Chinese”, 2024).

“According to the media, Nigerian Senate president David Mark also asked the president of the Chinese Parliament for assistance in the “mass production of military hardware” and assistance with a Nigerian aircraft spare parts production facility” (Campbell, 2013).

“The Minister of Defence, Muhammad Badaru Abubakar, CON, mni has said that Federal Government would collaborate with China Government in Technology transfer, Intelligence sharing and Military training in it quest to tackle insecurity in the country” (Ministry of Defence Nigeria, 2023).

“Three Chinese warships have been docked in the port of Lagos for five days, with Nigerian and Chinese officials saying the visit is aimed at enhancing maritime security in the region, which is plagued by piracy” (Bartlett, 2023).

“A rare visit to Nigeria this week by the Chinese navy is once again raising questions about Beijing’s military intentions in the strategically important Gulf of Guinea” (Bartlett, 2023).

Dependent variable: The West’s response

Frame	Indicator	Quote
Political-economic relations	Trade deals/policies or joining Chinese-led (economic) organisations	“We find ourselves in a competitive geopolitical environment: not only a battle of narratives but also a battle of offers,” the document argues. “We need to improve our offer and enhance our relationship with them” (Barigazzi, 2023).
	Investments in (technological or digital) infrastructure	“The European Union and Nigeria have signed a cooperation agreement on an €18 million EU support to enhance research and development capacities for implementing Nigeria’s national plan for the pharmaceutical industry and local production of vaccines and medical technologies” (Directorate-General for International Partnerships, 2024).
	Aid and loans	
		“Abuja may now turn to European lenders to finance its infrastructure needs. In any event, the United States remains Nigeria’s largest foreign investor, although most of the investments are concentrated in the oil and gas sector” (Chivvis <i>et al.</i> , 2023).
		“Led by AFD, EIB and the EU Commission are intending to complete the financing package together with the Lagos State government for this green transport project in Lagos, launching solar-powered ferries on the Lagos inland waterways” (Directorate-General for International Partnerships, 2023)
		“The operation aims to finance the construction of rural roads and agro logistic hubs in various

states in Nigeria” (Directorate-General for International Partnerships, 2023).

“The operation is to finance construction of about 150 small PV-hybrid mini-grids with a total PV capacity of 15 MWp, benefiting some 54,000 households and 6,000 SMEs” (Directorate-General for International Partnerships, 2023)

“The memo shows how, fourteen months into the Ukraine war, the EU is still grappling with how to expand its influence. While the West’s core coalition has remained remarkably solid on the war, officials have struggled to make broader inroads in Latin America, Africa and Asia — especially in the face of the billions China is spreading around” (Barigazzi, 2023).

“According to the EU's Global Gateway plans, Brussels is eyeing a secure international submarine fiber cable connecting the EU with Africa along the Atlantic Ocean coast. The new connection will foster the digital sovereignty of the two continents by diversifying existing links and ensuring the highest infrastructure and cyber security standards,” a draft document seen by POLITICO stated. That's a clear signal of the EU's growing unease at China's expansion of digital connectivity with parts of Africa” (Lau & Moens, 2022).

“The first MOU Chair Lewis signed was with Nigeria’s Bank of Industry, alongside Bank of Industry CEO Dr. Olasupo Olusi, to encourage collaboration and identify projects that enhance economic prosperity between Nigeria and the United States. The MOU will focus on mutual collaboration to discover new projects in Nigeria that involve the procurement of U.S. goods and services in several sectors, including climate and sustainability, creative arts and entertainment,

infrastructure, technology, and opportunities for small businesses and women-owned businesses” (Exim, 2024).

“The United States provided nearly \$1.2 billion in FY 2022 in foreign assistance resources to Nigeria —supporting economic development, education, democracy, health, energy and climate, humanitarian relief, security, and more” (Office of the Spokesperson, 2024).

Military relations

Arms deals to trade or donate military supplies

Building military bases abroad

Providing military education

“The State Department on Thursday announced the approval of the \$997 million sale of 24 Bell AH-1Z Viper helicopters and related equipment to Nigeria. The related equipment includes guidance, night vision and targeting systems as well as engines and training support, the department said in a notice to Congress” (Lee, 2022).

“This proposed sale will support the foreign policy goals and national security objectives of the United States by improving the security of a strategic partner in Sub-Saharan Africa,” the department told Congress” (Lee, 2022).

“A Chinese base in West Africa would give Beijing a military presence across the Atlantic from America’s East Coast, perceived as a threat to national security” (Bartlett, 2023).

“The Defense Department must enhance its engagement with Beijing’s target nations to offer those countries the United States as a stronger economic and security partner,” he said (Rep. Rob Wittman, 2023, as cited in Lendon & McCarthy, 2023).

Blinken’s visit to the region also comes days after China’s top diplomat, Wang Yi, wrapped his own swing through Africa, in which he also visited Ivory Coast. Phee dismissed the idea that the US is trying to compete with Beijing in Africa, saying it’s the press “who frame this as a US-China soccer match” (Molly Phee, 2024, as cited in Hansler, 2024).

“Recent and significant sales include the 2017 sale of 12 A-29 Super Tucano aircraft worth \$497 million to support Nigerian military operations against Boko Haram and ISIS West Africa. The case included special training on International Humanitarian Law, including an Air-to-Ground Integration (AGI) program designed to provide institutional and technical training to the Armed Forces of Nigeria (AFN) in order to mitigate the risk of civilian harm incidents. In August of last year, Nigeria delivered the first payment for 12 AH-1Z Attack Helicopters worth a total of \$997 million. The FMS case includes an additional \$25 million of funding allocated for the Nigeria’s AGI program, which continues to train the AFN on developing targeting processes that are legally compliant with International Humanitarian Law” (Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, 2024).

“The two sides further explored innovative solutions to improve security conditions in Nigeria and the region and pledged to continue to work together to address insecurity, including in the Gulf of Guinea. The two governments intend to establish a standing security working group that would enable deeper security cooperation” (Office of the Spokesperson, 2024).

“The Global Gateway program was launched in an attempt to project European power and influence as an international partner particularly for developing economies around the world” (Verhalst & Wax, 2024).

“To meet AGOA’s rigorous eligibility requirements, countries must establish or make continual progress toward establishing a market-based economy, the rule of law, political pluralism, and the right to due process. Additionally, countries must eliminate barriers to U.S. trade and investment, enact policies to reduce poverty, combat corruption, and protect human rights” (United States Trade Representative, n.d.).

“Enacted in May 2000, the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) is the cornerstone of U.S. economic engagement with the countries of sub-Saharan Africa” (Bureau of African Affairs, n.d.).

“The Department of State provides Nigeria with one of the highest International Military Education and Training (IMET) allocations in sub-Saharan Africa, with approximately \$5 million obligated from FY 2019 –2023.. Nigeria is also a partner in the Africa Military Education Program (AMEP) and has benefited from approximately \$500,000 since FY 2016 to support instructor and curriculum development at Nigerian military schools. From FY 2016-FY 2020, \$1.8 million was obligated for Nigeria in Foreign Military Financing to support maritime security, military professionalization, and counterterrorism efforts. Nigeria is an active member of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) and has benefitted over \$8 million worth of training, equipment, and advisory support for counterterrorism efforts between FY 2019-FY 2023” (Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, 2024).

“Within the region, there is scepticism about the visits. When US President Joe Biden hosted African leaders at the US-Africa Leaders' Summit in 2022, he said he would visit the

continent in 2023. But the visit never came, and criticism of what some consider a flippant engagement with the continent has continued. Blinken has visited sub-Saharan Africa four times since Biden’s administration came to power, but experts believe it cannot erase the disappointment of Biden’s unfulfilled promise to African leaders” (Adetayo, 2024).

“The chief U.S. diplomat’s trip to three countries in West Africa, and one in southern Africa, Angola, comes as Washington seeks to deepen its economic and security partnerships in regions where China and Russia have made significant inroads” (Ching, 2024).

Appendix B (Data sources)

Table 3.

Data collection China’s influence in Nigeria

	News/magazine article	Governmental/institutional reports
Military relationship	Oladipo & Stone (2021) – webpage <i>Reuters</i> Abdullahi (2022) – webpage <i>Al Jazeera</i>	Chivvis <i>et al.</i> (2023) – Webpage Carnegie Endowments

Political-economic relations	Tanko (2021) – webpage <i>BBC</i>	Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (2024) – Webpage U.S. State Department
	“Chinese” (2024) – webpage <i>The Economist</i>	McNermey <i>et al.</i> (2017) – Report RAND Corporation pp. vii-ix
	Bartlett (2023) – webpage <i>Voice of America</i>	Sheehan (2024) – Webpage National Interest
		Campbell (2013) – Webpage Council on Foreign Relations
		Ministry of Defense (2023) – Webpage Nigerian government
	David-Arinze (2023) – Webpage <i>Premium Times</i>	Tobi Oshodi (2022) – Webpage Mercator Institute for China Studies
	Bandeke (2023) – Webpage <i>Premium Times</i>	Saibu (2023) – Report Nigerian Economic Summit Group pp. 1-2
	Dzirutwe (2024) – Webpage <i>Reuters</i>	African Union (n.d.) – Webpage Badamasi & Tayo (2023) – Webpage Institute for Security Studies
	Kynge (2023) – Webpage <i>Financial Times</i>	Chivvis <i>et al.</i> (2023) – Webpage Carnegie Endowment
	Shehu (2018) – Webpage <i>Vanguard News</i>	Dollar (2019) – Report Brookings Institute pp. 4-5
	Lau & Moens (2022) – Webpage <i>POLITICO</i>	Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning (2020) – Report p.107 and p.119
	Onuah (2023) – Webpage <i>Reuters</i>	Sow (2018) – Webpage Brookings Institution
Jianchun (2023) – Webpage <i>Premium Times</i>	(Nantulya, 2021) – Webpage Africa Center for Strategic Studies	
“Nigeria” (2018) – Webpage <i>Premium Times</i>		

Table 4.

Data collection the West’s response

News/magazine articles	Governmental/institutional reports/websites
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Military relationship	<p>Lee (2022) – Webpage <i>PBS News</i></p> <p>Ali (2022) – Webpage <i>Reuters</i></p> <p>Lendon & McCarthy (2023) – Webpage <i>CNN</i></p> <p>Crowley (2024) – Webpage <i>New York Times</i></p> <p>Bartlett (2023) – webpage <i>Voice of America</i></p> <p>Abdullahi (2022) – Webpage <i>Al Jazeera</i></p> <p>Hansler (2024) – Webpage <i>CNN</i></p>	<p>Chivvis <i>et al.</i> (2023) – Webpage Carnegie Endowments</p>
Political-economic relations	<p>Crowley (2024) – Webpage <i>New York Times</i></p> <p>Barigazzi (2023) – Webpage <i>POLITICO</i></p> <p>Verhelst & Wax (2024) – Webpage <i>POLITICO</i></p> <p>Lau & Moens (2022) – Webpage <i>POLITICO</i></p> <p>Ching (2024) – Webpage <i>Voice of America</i></p> <p>Adetayo (2024) – Webpage <i>Al Jazeera</i></p>	<p>Dambre (2023) – Webpage Modern Diplomacy</p> <p>Directorate-General for International Partnerships (2021) – Report Multi-annual Indicative Programme pp. 4-17</p> <p>Directorate-General for International Partnerships (2023) – webpage European Union</p> <p>Directorate-General for International Partnerships (2024) – Webpage European Union</p> <p>Runde & Ramanujam (2022) – Webpage Center for Strategic and International Studies</p> <p>Runde <i>et al.</i> (2018) – Webpage Center for Strategic and International Studies</p> <p>Testimony of Geoffrey R. Pyatt (2023) – Webpage U.S. Department of State</p> <p>EXIM (2024) – Webpage</p> <p>DFC (2022) – Webpage</p>

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Office of the Spokesperson (2024)
– Webpage U.S. Department of
State

Bureau of African Affairs (n.d.) –
Webpage U.S. Department of
State

United States Trade
Representative – Webpage

U.S. Trade Representative (2020)
– Report 2020 Biennial Report on
the Implementation of the African
Growth and Opportunity Act p.
10, p. 16 and p. 50

Bureau of International Narcotics
and Law Enforcement Affairs
(2019) – Webpage U.S. State
Department
