

(Dis)Continuity and Change in Sino-Nigerien Relations (1974-2020)

AssoumiHarounaAbdoulkarim
School of International and Public Affairs, Jilin University, China

Abstract

This paper seeks to examine the nature of Sino-Nigerien relations. The foundation of this assessment is predicated upon the historical assessment of Sino-Nigerien relations which show that since the two countries commenced diplomatic relations with each other in 1974, there has been a number of diplomatic changes along the way, most importantly marked continuity and discontinuity as a result of various political realities including changes in regimes and regime types in Niamey coupled with foreign policy stances by Nigerien leaders that have been deemed hostile to China's "one state policy". It is on this premise of continuity, discontinuity and change that this paper analyzes Sino-Nigerien relations. Specifically, this paper seeks to account for the disparity between socio-economic and political relations in the period between 1974 and 1992, the discontinuity in the period between 1992 and 1996, and the changes in Sino-Nigerien relations in the 21st century. The paper analyses the historical trajectory of Sino-Nigerien relations in the aforementioned period. The paper argues that economic and political interests coupled by changes in geopolitical realities undergird this (dis)continuity and change in Sino-Nigerien relations.

Date of Submission: 17-11-2021

Date of Acceptance: 01-12-2021

1.1 Recapitulating the Historical Overview of Sino-Nigerien Relations

Since the institution of the People's Republic of China in 1949 when the Red Army ushered in the Chinese revolution, political interests have been at the heart of Beijing's foreign policy endeavours. In the African continent, this was executed as part of Beijing's quest for allies in the bi polar Cold War international system. Across the continent, China saw a common ground with African countries as they had shared an imperial history, with China recently emerging from Japanese and bourgeois imperialism while Africa was in the process of shedding off European imperialism. As such, both China and countries in the African continent had not only suffered under the colonial project pursued by the bourgeois imperialists but were also faced with the equivalent task of seeking independence for their countries as well as liberation from imperialist and oppressive forces in the post-World War Two era. To this end therefore, Beijing identified and pursued newly liberated polities as a key group with which to unite¹.

Another important factor delineating Beijing's pursuit of friends in the African continent were the geopolitical realities of the Cold War international system. In the post-World War Two era, the competition for Africa was heightened within the international system at large and in China's foreign policy agenda in particular. For instance, between 1963 and 1964, the then Chinese Prime Minister, Zhou Enlai, toured ten African nations and issued the eight ethos underpinning Chinese foreign fiscal and technological support. During the Cultural Revolution, Beijing forged relations with nineteen polities instituted diplomatic ties with China during the Cultural Revolution. Among the countries where Beijing established a diplomatic mission was in Niger's capital, Niamey in 1974². Located in the Sahara Sahel region neighbouring Mali to the West, Libya to the North, Algeria to the North West, Chad to the East, Nigeria to the South and Burkina Faso to the South West, Niger was founded in 1890 as part of the expansive French West African empire.

The country became independent in 1960. Since independence, Niger, has undergone extended episodes of tyrannical governments often headed by juntas. Like most countries in the West African regional economic bloc, Niger has been under military rule for significant periods of time. In 1974, the country fell under military

¹ Sun, Yun. 2014. *Africa in China's Foreign Policy*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution

² Ibid

rule with the junta ruling for the next thirteen years³. Since the inception of multiparty democracy in 1993, Niger has had five constitutional dispensations and intermittent periods of military governance. Niamey first established diplomatic ties with Beijing in 1974 following the ascent to power of the Nigerien military officer, Seyni Kountché, who toppled then Nigerien president, Diouri, as the country was suffering from a debilitating economic crunch and stark famine⁴.

Following Kountché's death in 1987, a civilian-led government was established in Niamey. In 1992, Niamey recognized the renegade Chinese province, Taiwan, in exchange for aid. In the early 1990s, the then president, Ali Saibou, responding to regional and domestic pressure initiated democratic reforms. These reforms ushered in the third Nigerien republic in 1993 under Mahamane Ousmane who hailed from the Democratic and Social Convention (CDSRahama) party and who now became the country's first democratically elected president⁵.

On 27th day of January, 1996, the democratically elected regime of Mahamane Ousmane was deposed in a martial putsch commandeered by Ibrahim Baré Maïnassara, a Colonel in the Nigerien Forces. Owing to the difficult socio-economic conditions preceding this coup d'état coupled with the ineffectiveness of the political rivalry between president Ousmane and the Nigerien parliament led by the then Nigerien premier, Hama Amadou, the putsch drew legitimacy from a significant section of the Nigerien citizenry. Maïnassara would go on and govern Niger as the fifth president for a period of three years before his assassination on the 9th day of April, 1999, by soldiers loyal to Daouda Malam Wanké, a major in the Nigerien military. Major Daouda Wanké, recommenced the course of democratization, a move that culminated in a constitutional referendum as well as a parliamentary and presidential plebiscite in July, October and November of the same year.

1.2 Conceptual Model

This article employed the Waltzian levels of analysis model in examining and analyzing (dis)continuity and change in Sino-Nigerien relations. The levels of analysis model, defined as the process through which scholars analyze levels of inquiry i.e., units in which variables are attached, with a view to explaining and understanding a phenomenon in foreign policy seeks to divide complex issues in the international milieu into minute 'chunks' for a more detailed and effective analysis and understanding. The level of analysis framework offers a number of levels with which to analyze behavior of states in the international system and how this behavior expended through a distinct foreign policy is predisposed by dynamics at the international, state or idiosyncratic levels. At the system level analysis which examines the way of the international system in the conduct and formulation of foreign policy, the single most vital variable in the international milieu is the power of a state over other actors. At the state level, the state's characteristics are examined since they ultimately impact upon the state's choices in the international milieu. For instance, if it is democratic, it will be unlikely to fight with other democracies. At the bureaucratic politics level, the argument is that dynamics underpinning the nature and conduct of the state's bureaucratic norms and institutions have a sway on the foreign policy trajectory of the state in question. At the idiosyncratic level of analysis, the focus is on key state officials and their personal choices and preferences as determinants of foreign policy trajectory of the state in question⁶.

The choice of this model is premised on the fact that the international milieu is multifarious and intricate where myriad of factors at the aforementioned levels ultimately influence how states, institutions and individuals make their choices and preferences. Secondly, this framework equips foreign policy analysts with an outline for which to assess how dynamics in the domestic front interact with those at the international milieu to create a foreign policy trajectory of the state in question⁷.

Another utility of the level of this model rests in its relevance to the subjects of concern of social science to which foreign policy analysis is part and parcel of, namely; effectiveness in description, explanation, and extrapolation of phenomena of foreign policy behavior or behaviours directed to influencing relations in the international milieu. As Singer argues, the usage of the levels of analysis framework is pivotal in analyzing the conduct and formulation of foreign policy due to the fact that the levels of analysis such as the international

³ Bertelsmann Stiftung. 2016. *Niger Country Report*. Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) 2016, Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung.

⁴ Cabestan, Jean-Pierre. 2018. "Beijing's 'Going Out' Strategy and Belt and Road Initiative in the Sahel: The Case of China's Growing Presence in Niger." *Journal of Contemporary China* 1-22

⁵ Bertelsmann Stiftung. 2016. *Niger Country Report*. Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) 2016, Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung

⁶ Newmann, Bill. 2016. *A Brief Introduction to Theories on International Relations and Foreign Policy*. <http://www.people.vcu.edu/~wnewmann/468theory.htm>

⁷ Andriole, Stephen J. 1979. "The Levels of Analysis Problems and the Study of Foreign International, And Global Affairs." *International Interactions, Vol. 5* 113-133

level helps a foreign policy analyst to encompass the totality of interactions which take place within the system and environment. Furthermore, the levels of analysis framework offers more holistic scrutiny making it effective in description and explanation⁸. In addition, in analyzing foreign policy using the levels of analysis framework, there is an inherent advantage in that the framework is adequate for making causal as well as correlative statements based on the system level trends. The framework is focal especially in case specific investigations of foreign policy phenomenon in that one is able to utilize the potency of a specific level of analysis or group of levels of analysis with a view to harnessing the value that such level(s) of analysis may accrue depending on the purpose of one's research or analysis. Where one uses a group of levels of analysis or a holistic framework, the synthesis of these levels of analysis is crucial to the progress and growth of the explanatory and predictive power of foreign policy analysis as a distinct field of analysis and research.

2.1 Sino-Nigerien Relations (1974-2020)

As independent African countries started emerging from the yoke of colonialism particularly in the 1960s, both Beijing and Taipei pitched camp in African capitals seeking to forge diplomatic relations across the continent. For most of the 1960s, including in Niger, Taiwan easily outpaced China in its diplomatic relations in the African continent⁹. Having attained independence in 1960, the *annus mirabilis* of African independence, Niger would first forge ties with Taipei in 1963, in effect recognizing its statehood. However, just as was the case across the African continent, Taiwan's relationship with Niger frayed over the next nine years culminating in Niamey's ejection of Taiwan and the normalization of ties with China in 1974¹⁰.

In 1992, Teng-hui's government granted Niger a \$50 million loan in exchange for Niamey's acknowledgment of Taiwan's sovereignty.¹¹ Beijing responded by breaking its diplomatic dealings with Niger. After a four-year hiatus, the two countries renormalized their diplomatic relations in 1996. Since then, China and Niger have deepened their engagements as part of the Chinese quest to expand relations between Beijing and the African continent as captured in the Forum on Sino-African Cooperation. Sino-Nigerien cooperation has been one of the Forum on Sino-African Cooperation's most fruitful partnerships culminating in a number of development projects in Niger, primarily in the areas of agriculture, hydrology, environment and infrastructure.¹²

For instance, since the early 1990s, China has been engaging in medical diplomacy by sending medical doctors to the Nigerien National Hospital in Niamey alongside several regional hospitals for one-year rotations. Additionally, Beijing is putting a firm footprint in Niger's resource sectors with a number of investments in uranium mining, oil and gas production and refining as well as infrastructure. For instance, the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) struck a US\$5 billion deal with the Nigerien government geared towards developing the oil and gas resources of Niger's Agadem block. In 2009, Beijing helped to boost Niger's revenue by 26% when it gave the Nigerien government a "signing bonus" for the Agadem block on the upward of US\$300 million.¹³

Moreover, there has been a number of Chinese-funded new infrastructure in Niamey including a new four-lane bridge across the Niger river. The regime of Mamadou Tandja may serve as a critical entry point for the deepening of Sino Nigerien relations¹⁴.

⁸ Andriole, Stephen J. 1979. "The Levels of Analysis Problems and the Study of Foreign International, And Global Affairs." *International Interactions*, Vol. 5 113-133

⁹ Solomon, Salem. 2018. "Once Influential in Africa, Taiwan Loses All But One Ally." *Voice of America*, May 26. <https://www.voanews.com/africa/once-influential-africa-taiwan-loses-all-one-ally>

¹⁰ Cabestan, Jean-Pierre. 2018. "Beijing's 'Going Out' Strategy and Belt and Road Initiative in the Sahel: The Case of China's Growing Presence in Niger." *Journal of Contemporary China* 1-22

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Global Security Organization. 2018. *Niger - China Relations*. Accessed June 6, 2021. <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/africa/ne-forrel-prc.htm>. See also, Cabestan, Jean-Pierre. 2018. "Beijing's 'Going Out' Strategy and Belt and Road Initiative in the Sahel: The Case of China's Growing Presence in Niger." *Journal of Contemporary China* 1-22

¹³ Global Security Organization. 2018. *Niger - China Relations*. Accessed June 6, 2021. <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/africa/ne-forrel-prc.htm>

¹⁴ Ibid

3.1 Scrutinizing the (Dis)Continuity and Change in Sino-Nigerien Relations (1974-2020)

3.1.1 The State Level Account for the (Dis)Continuity and Change in Sino-Nigerien Relations(1974-2020)

At the state level of analysis, there are a number of factors that account for the (dis)continuity and change in Sino-Nigerien relations in the period under observation. For one, China has demonstrated its readiness and astuteness to fully liaise with a myriad of regimes. In an environment as dynamic as Niger's which is prone to coups and counter-coups, Beijing has shown its judicious zing to briskly adjust to new political environments. As such, Beijing was able to forge ties with SeyniKountché's junta in the period between 1974 and 1987. With the renormalization of relations under president Ibrahim BaréMainassara in 1996, Beijing was able to carve a special relationship with Niger, relations that would persist after Maïnassara's elimination in 1999 and Niger's consequent yield to democracy under MamadouTandja at the turn of the millennium. Sino-Nigerien relations became even closer following China's envelopment in Niger's uranium sector at Niamey's request and would persist even after Tandja's ouster in 2010¹⁵. Sino-African trade and industryrelations have a tendency to run free of political currents. As such, regime changes have not evocatively impacted upon business ties in Niger¹⁶.

Despite the earlier hiccup occasioned by Niamey's short lived recognition of Taiwan (1992-1996), Sino-Nigerien relations have benefited from a number of factors. For instance, the military coup d'état carried out on 26th January 1996 ended the Third Republic which had diplomatic ties with Taipei. Under, Ibrahim BaréMainassara, a military colonel who had worked under SeyniKountché¹⁷ as the second Nigerien president's head of staff for a substantial amount of years, Niamey renormalized ties with Beijing. This was also aided by the ascent to power of Maïnassarawho fast-tracked the renormalization with Beijing in the wake of the sanctioning of his regime by the West¹⁸.

Secondly, domestic politics disfavouring French resource colonialism have also played a critical role in asserting Sino-Nigerien relations. In early September 2007 for instance, there was increased pressure from the Nigerien civil society as several civil-society groups organized marches to seeking the ejection of the French uranium company from Niger on allegations of Areva's support of northern Niger's rebels¹⁹.

In many African countries that were former colonial subjects of France, they remain as the Gallic powerhouse's sphere of influence. Area-Boy Diplomacy was a term coined by Gabriel Olusanya, Nigerian diplomat who served as Nigeria's ambassador to Paris. In coined the expression 'area boy diplomacy', Olusanya was drawing parallels to the thuggish nature of local youths to describe Nigeria's foreign policy under the Sani Abacha's regime (1993-1998) as conducted by Abacha's abrasive foreign affairs minister, Tom Ikimi²⁰. This paper adopts the phrase in reference to France's approach to relations with its former colonial possessions, Niger included.

The French have monopolized uranium production in Niger from the time when the nuclear material was first discovered in colonial Niger in 1957. Since then, Niger's former colonial master has been heavily reliant on Areva's operations in Niger for uranium supplying France's own energy reactors and nuclear weapons program. Additionally, France has used its influence and its *chasse gardée* (exclusive preserve) policy on prized colonial assets to uphold its chokehold on Niger's resources. However, China's 'Going Out' and the Belt and Road Initiative strategies fashioned an opening for Niamey to partially ease out of the yoke of French resource colonialism by broadening its trade and cooperation with China in the exploitation of extractives such as uranium and petroleum oil²¹.

On the other end of the state level continuum, China's Going Out policy encourages Chinese initiatives to project themselves globally. This policy is critical in understanding the deepening of Sino-Nigerien relations owing to its trend and skyrocketing growth. According to Salidjanova (2011), the rapid development of China's OFDI activities particularly in Africa are predicated on the need to deepen Sino-African socio-economic relations as well as to expand the Chinese network of international natural resources supplies and markets. In 2010 for instance, Chinese investors and investments looking for overseas deals accounted for a 10th of global

¹⁵ Cabestan, Jean-Pierre. 2018. "Beijing's 'Going Out' Strategy and Belt and Road Initiative in the Sahel: The Case of China's Growing Presence in Niger." *Journal of Contemporary China* 1-22

¹⁶ Thrall, Lloyd. 2015. *China's Expanding African Relations Implications for U.S. National Security*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation

¹⁷ SeyniKountché was the Nigerien military head of state from 1974 to 1987

¹⁸ Cabestan, Jean-Pierre. 2018. "Beijing's 'Going Out' Strategy and Belt and Road Initiative in the Sahel: The Case of China's Growing Presence in Niger." *Journal of Contemporary China* 1-22

¹⁹ McGregor, Andrew. 2007. "Mining for Energy: China's Relations with Niger Publication." *China Brief* 7 (18)

²⁰ Adebajo, Adekeye. 2002. *Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers

²¹ McGregor, Andrew. 2007. "Mining for Energy: China's Relations with Niger Publication." *China Brief* 7 (18)

deals by value²². This can be seen in the Sino-Nigerien commitment to the Belt and Road cooperation particularly in the implementation of major projects²³.

The expansion of mainland China's engagement with Niger in the post-1996 period has been pursued as part of the two Chinese international foreign relations' strategies' i.e., the 'Going Out' strategy initiated in the late 1990s and the Belt and Road Initiative launched in 2013 have thrust Niger and Africa at large to an elevated position in China's formulation and conduct of its foreign policy. The expansion of mainland China's engagement with Africa is the most significant development in Niger's development and foreign relations since the country got independence from France in 1960²⁴.

According to Taylor (2009), the Sino-Nigerien relations should also be construed as part of the Chinese engagements in Africa. Unlike other players in Africa, Taylor argues, China has perfected the art of Sino-African cooperation despite the dangerous political pitfalls in Africa. As such, Chinese products have provided African consumers with more choices. Moreover, China's strategic approach prioritizing economic development and sovereignty has helped cement its relations with African countries particularly in land locked countries such as Niger which are starved of much needed infrastructure and economic development. Another important factor that underpins the dynamism of Sino-African interactions in countries such as Niger is the multiplicity of Chinese actors which help cement economic and political relations. China's interactions with African countries are not singular. Various Chinese stakeholders, such as the government, the Communist Party, state-owned enterprises and private businesses have been engaged in the continent²⁵.

3.1.2 The System Level Account for the (Dis)Continuity and Change in Sino-Nigerien Relations(1974-2020)

At the systemic level of analysis, there are a number of facets to consider. First, when financing African countries such as Niger, the West, through bilateral and multilateral engagements tends to employ an overbearing approach coupled with choking conditionalities, an inconvenience for poorer African countries such as Niger. In comparison, Beijing's financing strategy departs from this approach by employing an amalgamation of grants, aid, and loans with cost-effective infrastructure projects. Additionally, at a time when Western investments to the African continent are diminishing, Beijing has filled the ensuing lacuna by pumping more foreign direct investments into the continent. China's "all-inclusive" approach that deals with African governments without any pre-set conditions endears it in African capitals. Moreover, Chinese companies tend to adopt and maintain a low profile and avoid becoming a target of opposing local factions, an approach that keeps them out of domestic politics²⁶.

The anarchic structure of the international system has been delineated as a critical factor in how states pursue their foreign policy objectives. According to Waltz (1979), the international arena is a competitive and hostile arena where national interests reign supreme. This is largely predicated on the structure or architecture of the international system which forces states to pursue their national interests aggressively. In essence, Waltz (1979) perceives states in the international system as entities that are ensnared in an iron cage where they have diminutive option beyond advancing their national interests if they expect to survive.²⁷

Moreover, in the international system, state actors have to ponder strategically, tactfully, and instrumentally in order to be prosperous in make the most out of their interactions with other actors in the international system for the sake of their own national interests. In this regard, relations in the international system are construed as a rational-instrumental activity²⁸. Moreover, international relations can be construed as a bargaining process whereby actors seek results that, even though they are not ideal, are better than the alternatives.²⁹

²²Salidjanova, Nargiza. 2011. *Going Out: An Overview of China's Outward Foreign Direct Investment*. Washington, DC: U.S.-China Economic & Security Review Commission

²³Desheng, Cao, and AnBaijie. 2019. "Belt, Road high on China-Niger agenda." *China Daily*, May 29. <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201905/29/WS5ced7970a3104842260be540.html>

²⁴Large, Dan, and Shiuh-Shen Chien. 2008. "China Rising In Africa: Whither Taiwan?" *Fifth Conference of the European Association of Taiwan Studies*. Prague: Charles University

²⁵Taylor, Ian. 2009. *China's New Role in Africa*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers

²⁶Venkateswaran, Lokanathan. 2020. *China's belt and road initiative: Implications in Africa*. ORF Issue Brief No. 395, New Delhi: Observer Research Foundation

²⁷Waltz, Kenneth. 1979. *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley

²⁸Schelling, T. 1980. *The Strategy of Conflict*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

²⁹Ibid

This argument is further reiterated by Margaret Levi who is of the view that actors in the international system have preferences and choose according to those preferences. Secondly, Levi argues that these actors interact strategically with other units in the international system to achieve their own goals. States must also make decisions while facing uncertainty. Such uncertainties are accounted for by making decisions that are consistent relative to the actor's preferences.³⁰ According to Reiter (2003), for actors in the international system facing a diplomatic dilemma, they are in essence seeking to maximize their gains.³¹ This is determined by choices and preferences.

This resonates with the Thucydidean thesis that in the international system, motivations of honour, fear and interest are the fundamental principles of international relations³². According to Keohane, states pursue power as an end in its own right or as a means to attaining other ends. Moreover, states behave rationally and are therefore comprehensible to outsiders in rational terms³³. According to Thucydides' thesis on international relations, there is a need to understand the political and cultural context of states as actors in the international system and how the same can lead to conflict³⁴. As such, in order to understand international conflict, understanding the social, economic, political and cultural differences is important in order to predict actions by states in the international system.

The short lived hiatus in Sino-Nigerien relations can be explained by a number of reasons. The first lies in Taipei's strategic miscalculation of diplomacy in the post-colonial African states. For a country largely aping a Western-style approach in Africa emphasizing an imposing and prescriptive carrot and stick approach, this was bound to fail. Africa was not looking for new colonial masters but rather pursuing a win-win diplomatic approach, something that Beijing aptly perfected by focusing on massive infrastructure investments³⁵.

In 1991, Niger was under economic recess. At this point in time, wage expenditure accounted for 90% of the tax revenue. To compound matters further, there was an abysmal level of foreign aid. Coupled with domestic pressure from workers' unions to improve public sector wages, there was a dire need of resources³⁶. The Taiwanese checkbook diplomacy was conducted at this point in time when Taipei's "take it or leave it" would have given Niamey little choice.

Moreover, as aforementioned, the breakdown in Sino-Nigerien relations can also be attributed to the aggressive checkbook diplomacy pursued by the then Taiwanese president, Lee Teng-hui who reigned over the renegade island in the period between 1988 and 2000. Faced by the fear of reabsorption by the People's Republic's "One China Policy" coupled with the attendant lack of recognition, Taipei became more overt in its quest for international recognition. At the heart of the battlefield for Taipei's recognition was in the Global South and particularly in Africa and in Latin America. In Africa, this was pursued through an aggressive checkbook diplomacy where investments were bartered for diplomatic ties³⁷.

Additionally, Cold War rationales pressed for the need to align with the West and with Western allies. This initially benefitted Taipei. However, in the post-Cold War era, economic interests incentivized African polities to enhance their diplomatic forays with Beijing³⁸. It is no wonder then that in 1996, reeling from the disappointed of the bad check that was Niamey's diplomatic dalliance with Taipei, Niger renormalized diplomatic ties with Beijing in the hope of getting meaning socio-economic and political engagements with Beijing.

³⁰Levi, M. (1997). A Model, a Method, and a Map: Rational Choice in Comparative and Historical Analysis. In M. I. Lichbach, & A. S. Zuckerman, *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure* (pp. 19-41). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

³¹Reiter D. 2003. Exploring the bargaining model of war. *Perspect. Polit.* 1(1):27-43

³²Thucydides. 1980. *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

³³Keohane, Robert. 1986. "Realism, Neorealism and the Study of World Politics." In *Neorealism and Its Critics*, edited by Robert Keohane. New York, NY: Columbia University Press

³⁴Thucydides. 1980. *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

³⁵Solomon, Salem. 2018. "Once Influential in Africa, Taiwan Loses All But One Ally." *Voice of America*, May 26. <https://www.voanews.com/africa/once-influential-africa-taiwan-loses-all-one-ally>

³⁶Elischer, Sebastian. 2013. *Contingent Democrats in Action: Organized Labor and Regime Change in the Republic of Niger*. GIGA Working Papers No. 231, Hamburg: German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA)

³⁷Solomon, Salem. 2018. "Once Influential in Africa, Taiwan Loses All But One Ally." *Voice of America*, May 26. <https://www.voanews.com/africa/once-influential-africa-taiwan-loses-all-one-ally>

³⁸Rich, Timothy S., and Vasabjit Banerjee. 2015. "Running Out of Time? The Evolution of Taiwan's Relations in Africa." *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 44 (1): 141-161

To Nye (2011), in the conduct and formulation of foreign policies, many countries tend to adopt a command aspect of power which denotes getting others to act in ways that are contrary to their initial preferences and strategies. To Nye (2011), this form of power is insufficient in the prosecution and realization of a state's objectives. As such, Nye (2011) adopts Bachrach and Baratz's dimension of framing and agenda setting coupled with Lukes' persuasion and attraction power. To Nye (2011), it is possible to shape others' preferences by affecting their expectations of what is legitimate or feasible. On the other hand, persuasion and attraction power emerges as ideas and beliefs are used to help shape others' initial preferences³⁹.

Framing and agenda setting power coupled with persuasion and attraction power coalesce into soft power which Nye (2011) conceptualizes as the ability to affect others to obtain preferred outcomes by framing the agenda, persuasion, and positive attraction. On the other hand, the ability to fuse these faces into a strategic power projection results in what Nye refers to as 'smart power'⁴⁰. Nye's conceptualization of power is critical in helping us understand how command power, agenda setting power and persuasion and attraction power is used and projected in order for states and foreign policy actors to get the outcomes they want. Moreover, Nye helps us understand how these faces of power can be nuanced in the structural facet of international politics as states pursue possession goals (specific and often tangible foreign policy objectives such as national security and economic interests) and milieu goals (structural and intangible foreign policy goals such as a favourable international environment).

This can be seen in the co-optive approach adopted by China in its pursuit of diplomatic ties with African capitals. To Aiping and Zhan (2018), Sino-African cooperation forums are an effective platform and multilateral mechanism that Beijing has pursued to chart a pathway for Sino-African relations by not initiating cooperation arrangements but also in conducting collective consultations and carrying out pragmatic cooperation⁴¹.

Another rationale behind the deepening of Sino-Nigerien relations is Beijing's objective to end Taiwan's diplomatic presence in the international milieu. For China, it is a high priority issue that the One China Policy is the overriding theme of international relations. As shown, Taipei's checkbook diplomacy had succeeded in winning recognition from some African countries such as Niger in 1992 who benefitted from a \$50 million loan, São Tomé and Príncipe in 1997, whereby Taiwan advanced a \$30 million loan and Chad who benefitted from a \$125 million loan in 1997⁴².

However, with the advanced economic development seen in China accompanied with a massive financial war chest at the disposal of Beijing's foreign policy institutions and actors, China has been reigning supreme in the diplomatic battle and has gradually edged Taipei out of Africa. In 1996, Niger severed its diplomatic relations with Taipei in favour of forging and cultivating formal relationships with the People's Republic of China⁴³.

Another factor to consider is global investment imperialism that left a lacuna for countries such as China to fill in. Unlike in settler societies where there was a greater capacity for independent capitalist development that was largely built upon the heavy exploitation of African land and labour as well as externally induced policies of economic nationalism, countries such as Niger were not recipients of settler capital which tended to project development even in the post-colonial era since they were able to use imperial capitalistic investment to avoid relegation to the periphery of the world system as perpetual suppliers of raw materials or as providers of dependent domestic markets for the manufactures of the metropole⁴⁴.

In Niger, another edge that Beijing has and which is critical in forging Sino-Nigerien relations is its approach to investment in Niger and Africa at large. As Thrall (2015) enumerates, Chinese investment, trade, aid, and senior leadership visits are far less correlated. While Niger ranks high as a one of the key investment destinations for Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) into Africa (behind South Africa and the Democratic Republic of Congo), the country only accounts for 0.2% of Sino-African trade⁴⁵. To compound matters further, the country is landlocked with the closest port, Cotonou, being located over 1,000 km from Niger. As such, the

³⁹ Nye, Joseph S. 2011. "Power and Foreign Policy." *Journal of Political Power* 4 (1): 9-24

⁴⁰ Nye, Joseph S. 2011. "Power and Foreign Policy." *Journal of Political Power* 4 (1): 9-24

⁴¹ Aiping, Zeng, and Shu Zhan. 2018. "Origin, Achievements, and Prospects of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation." *China International Studies* 88-108

⁴² Sun, Yun. 2014. *Africa in China's Foreign Policy*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution

⁴³ Sun, Yun. 2014. *Africa in China's Foreign Policy*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution

⁴⁴ Brown, Michael Barratt. 1982. Developing Societies as Part of an International Political Economy. In Hamza Alavi and Teodor Shanin, *Introduction to the Sociology of "Developing Societies"* (pp 153-171). London: McMillan Press.

⁴⁵ Thrall, Lloyd. 2015. *China's Expanding African Relations Implications for U.S. National Security*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation

country finds itself at the heart of a turbulent region marked by political and religious schisms and violence such as the Boko Haram in northern Nigeria, the Touareg separatist and armed movements in northern Mali, and the civil strife occasioned by state collapse in southern Libya.⁴⁶ For the West, Niger would have been treated as a third-tier state of marginal interest beyond resource exploitation.

4.1 Conclusion

As countries navigate the international milieu, there are remarkable continuities and change in the formulation and conduct of their foreign policies owing to changes in domestic politics, the international arena as well as dynamism in the scope of issues in foreign policy. As such, the foreign policy relations and outlook of any given government depends heavily on domestic and international events. In the case of Sino-Nigerien relations, this can be located in factors inherent in the state level politics (as seen in the case of Niger's power politics) and foreign policy statecraft (as seen in China's foreign policy strategies) coupled with national interest considerations.

Acknowledgements

My acknowledgements goes from Jilin University academic, also extend my gratitude to academic staff to School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA). Exceptional acknowledgements go to my Co-supervisor Dr. Zou Xiaolong from the School of International and Public Affairs who invited and guided me for this paper work.

I take full responsibility for any errors of omission or commission.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Adebajo, Adekeye. 2002. *Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers
- [2]. Brown, Michael Barratt. 1982. *Developing Societies as Part of an International Political Economy*. In Hamza Alavi and Teodor Shanin, *Introduction to the Sociology of "Developing Societies"* (pp 153-171). London: McMillan Press.
- [3]. Aiping, Zeng, and Shu Zhan. 2018. "Origin, Achievements, and Prospects of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation." *China International Studies* 88-108
- [4]. Andriole, Stephen J. 1979. "The Levels of Analysis Problems and the Study of Foreign International, And Global Affairs." *International Interactions*, Vol. 5 113-133
- [5]. Bellabona, Paola, and Francesca Spigarelli. 2007. "Moving from Open Door to Go Global: China goes on the world stage." *International Journal of Chinese Culture and Management* 1 (1): 93-107
- [6]. Bertelsmann Stiftung. 2016. *Niger Country Report*. Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) 2016, Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung.
- [7]. Cabestan, Jean-Pierre. 2018. "Beijing's 'Going Out' Strategy and Belt and Road Initiative in the Sahel: The Case of China's Growing Presence in Niger." *Journal of Contemporary China* 1-22
- [8]. Desheng, Cao, and An Baijie. 2019. "Belt, Road high on China-Niger agenda." *China Daily*, May 29. <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201905/29/WS5ced7970a3104842260be540.html>
- [9]. Elischer, Sebastian. 2013. *Contingent Democrats in Action: Organized Labor and Regime Change in the Republic of Niger*. GIGA Working Papers No. 231, Hamburg: German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA)
- [10]. Global Security Organization. 2018. *Niger - China Relations*. Accessed June 6, 2021. <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/africa/ne-forrel-prc.htm>. S
- [11]. Keohane, Robert. 1986. "Realism, Neorealism and the Study of World Politics." In *Neorealism and Its Critics*, edited by Robert Keohane. New York, NY: Columbia University Press
- [12]. Large, Dan, and Shih-Shen Chien. 2008. "China Rising In Africa: Whither Taiwan?" Fifth Conference of the European Association of Taiwan Studies. Prague: Charles University
- [13]. Levi, M. (1997). *A Model, a Method, and a Map: Rational Choice in Comparative and Historical Analysis*. In M. I. Lichbach, & A. S. Zuckerman, *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure* (pp. 19-41). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- [14]. McGregor, Andrew. 2007. "Mining for Energy: China's Relations with Niger Publication." *China Brief* 7 (18)
- [15]. Newmann, Bill. 2016. *A Brief Introduction to Theories on International Relations and Foreign Policy*. <http://www.people.vcu.edu/~wnewmann/468theory.htm>
- [16]. Nye, Joseph S. 2011. "Power and Foreign Policy." *Journal of Political Power* 4 (1): 9-24
- [17]. Reiter D. 2003. Exploring the bargaining model of war. *Perspect. Polit.* 1(1):27-43
- [18]. Rich, Timothy S., and Vasabjit Banerjee. 2015. "Running Out of Time? The Evolution of Taiwan's Relations in Africa." *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 44 (1): 141-161
- [19]. Salidjanova, Nargiza. 2011. *Going Out: An Overview of China's Outward Foreign Direct Investment*. Washington, DC: U.S.-China Economic & Security Review Commission
- [20]. Schelling, T. 1980. *The Strategy of Conflict*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- [21]. Seyni Kountché was the Nigerien military head of state from 1974 to 1987
- [22]. Solomon, Salem. 2018. "Once Influential in Africa, Taiwan Loses All But One Ally." *Voice of America*, May 26. <https://www.voanews.com/africa/once-influential-africa-taiwan-loses-all-one-ally>
- [23]. Sun, Yun. 2014. *Africa in China's Foreign Policy*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution
- [24]. Taylor, Ian. 2009. *China's New Role in Africa*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers
- [25]. Thrall, Lloyd. 2015. *China's Expanding African Relations Implications for U.S. National Security*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation

⁴⁶World Bank. 2017. *Republic of Niger Priorities for Ending Poverty and Boosting Shared Prosperity Systematic Country Diagnostic*. Washington, DC: World Bank

- [26]. Thucydides. 1980. *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
- [27]. Venkateswaran, Lokanathan. 2020. China's belt and road initiative: Implications in Africa. ORF Issue Brief No. 395, New Delhi: Observer Research Foundation
- [28]. Waltz, Kenneth. 1979. *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley
- [29]. World Bank. 2017. *Republic of Niger Priorities for Ending Poverty and Boosting Shared Prosperity Systematic Country Diagnostic*. Washington, DC: World Bank

XXXXXXXX. "(Dis)Continuity and Change in Sino-Nigerien Relations (1974-2020)." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention (IJHSSI)*, vol. 10(11), 2021, pp 42-50. Journal DOI- 10.35629/7722