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Friend or Foe: Perceptions of China in Africa

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Friend or Foe: Perceptions of China in Africa

Abstract

China's rush to Africa for resources and a sphere of influence has inspired much debate in the academic world. Many western scholars generalize China's Africa strategy or African perceptions of that strategy. These are both grave mistakes. While China's objectives in Africa are the same all over, the way it achieves that strategy varies from nation to nation. In addition, African perceptions of China vary from nation to nation. Using Algeria and Niger as main case studies, this paper will show that the wealth of a nation changes the way that the Chinese government and Chinese nationals interact with that nation, and, that this modification of behavior is what causes positive or negative perceptions of China.

Keywords

China, Africa, Belt and Road Initiative, Trade, Migration

Disciplines

African Studies | Chinese Studies | International and Area Studies

Comments

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Friend or Foe: Perceptions of China in Africa

"China is a sleeping lion. Let her sleep, for when she wakes she will shake the world."
— **Napoleon Bonaparte**

Introduction:

China is investing all over Africa to acquire the natural resources it needs to sustain itself. China also hopes to bring countries into its sphere of influence to solidify itself as the preeminent power in Asia and the world. In some places, China is received well and praised for their engagements. In others, anti-Chinese sentiments rise with Chinese investment and involvement. This capstone paper looks at general China policy towards Africa as well as two specific case studies and intends to answer why China is perceived so negatively in some places and so positively in others.

Methodology:

For this paper, two somewhat similar African countries with very different perceptions of China were selected to serve as comparative case studies. For Algeria, the perception of China is less than 40% positive. In Niger, that number is over 80%. For this paper, the dependent variable will be "% positive perception of China" and the dependent variables will be isolated throughout this paper. Both countries were French

colonies that gained independence within two years of each other in the early 1960's. They border each other and are both overwhelmingly Muslim countries. For this paper, journal articles, international news articles, books, international organization data, development project data and speeches by Chinese leaders were used to determine the types of activities that China has engaged in within Niger and Algeria as well as how they were perceived.

China Background:

Following the Turmoil of the Mao era, China opened itself up to the world. It embraced a pseudo-capitalist system that it called “socialism with Chinese characteristics” and then performed the greatest economic miracle the world has ever seen. In 1980, China's economy was a mere \$191 billion. Decades of chaos and failed policies had left China stuck in the past and economically stagnant. By 2016, China's miracle was still occurring. According to World Bank data, China's GDP had hit an astounding \$11.2 trillion.¹ China maintains the largest foreign exchange currency reserve in the world, over \$3 trillion. Most of those reserves are in United States Dollars.

In terms of foreign relations, China has largely stayed neutral. This is not to say that it has been unengaged with the world, it has been rapidly building relationships with Africa and South America especially. The claim of neutrality centers around the fact that China does not engage in conflict with other nations outside of what it considers its own territory. China does not back regimes unless it feels it is resisting western powers

¹ The World Bank. 2018. World Development Indicators. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank (producer and distributor).

imperialistic tendencies. Even in those cases, China often only supports others through weapons sales, bypassing sanctions to trade, and vetoing UN resolutions. China does not have an issue with selling to both sides of a conflict and is more concerned with economic growth than ideological hegemony. Although increasingly, China's economic growth has led it to become a model competing against the Washington Consensus.

China is not only experiencing a GDP explosion, it is maturing its economy in terms of the goods and services it produces. Li Keqiang announced the "Made in China 2025" campaign which aims to shift China from manufacturing goods for foreign firms to innovating and creating at home. This campaign clearly illustrates China's goal of dominating in a higher level of production of goods and services. In addition, China has been investing heavily in technologies of the future. They invest more than double what the United States does in green technology and fighting climate change. China has begun to invest heavily in space technology, high-speed trains, and artificial intelligence. They currently boast the fastest supercomputer in the world and it relies on Chinese chips as opposed to most supercomputers which rely on American made chips. China's two largest tech firms combine for over \$1 trillion in value.²

Accompanying this heavy industrial structure is the tremendous waste of energy. The deputy commissioner of China's National Development and Reform Commission, Zhang Guobao 张国宝, commissioned a study that exposed this inefficiency. According to his study, to generate one United States Dollar of GDP, China consumes eight times the amount of energy that Japan does; and in producing the same industrial goods,

² "The Challenger," *The Economist*, March 15, 2018.

China uses 11.5 times the energy of Japan.³ This inefficiency means that China must reach out to secure the resources it needs to serve its 1.4 billion people.

China In Africa:

Even under Mao, China has always been a friend to non-aligned African countries. Diplomatic ties began in the early stages of the People's Republic of China, with Egypt recognizing the People's Republic of China as early as 1956 and the rest of Africa following suit shortly afterward. By the end of the 1960's, most of Africa recognized the Peoples Republic. By contrast, the United States only recognized China in 1979. Zhou Enlai even embarked on the great Africa tours as early as 1963 to strengthen ties. Since then, China has positioned itself as the voice of the lesser developed countries. Having suffered from underdevelopment and colonialism itself, China was uniquely positioned to be the voice of the south. China's goal was to help Africa on the basis of mutual benefit, non-conditionality and demonstration by example.⁴ This history and the Cold War politics of the time drove China's stated policy of non-interference, as it was uneager to be perceived as a modern-day colonial power. These ties were largely diplomatic in nature and revolved around aid and politics.

The depth of the political relationship, however, did not translate into an economic one. That relationship would take decades to form, and it would form for largely political reasons. Aside from the domestic need for resources in China, after the

³ Jiang, Wenran. 2009. "Fuelling the Dragon: China's Rise and its Energy and Resources Extraction in Africa." *The China Quarterly* 199: 587-588.

⁴ Strauss, Julia C. 2009. "The Past in the Present: Historical and Rhetorical Lineages in China's Relations With Africa." *The China Quarterly* 199: 780.

events of September 11th, 2001, China positioned itself as sympathetic to the plight of Muslims under ideological attack. As recently as 2013, Li Ziran, an organizer of a China-Arab states economic and trade forum event, was quoted as saying “the kind of discrimination Muslims faced in the west after 9/11 will have no place in Chinese-Arab relations,” still spouting the idea of rampant Islamophobia in the United States.⁵ The graph below shows this explosion in trade from 2000 to 2015.

China’s presence in some of Africa’s most conflict-ridden countries is well recognized. Under the banner of non-interference, Beijing has been able to finance resource investments, support Chinese-led infrastructure projects and encourage firms to open up businesses in countries that might otherwise be neglected because of sanctions or through the cautious approach adopted by most traditional donor countries and Western investors. As a result, China has been able to stake out a significant position in sectors and markets in countries as different as Angola, Ethiopia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Chad, Sudan and South Sudan.⁶

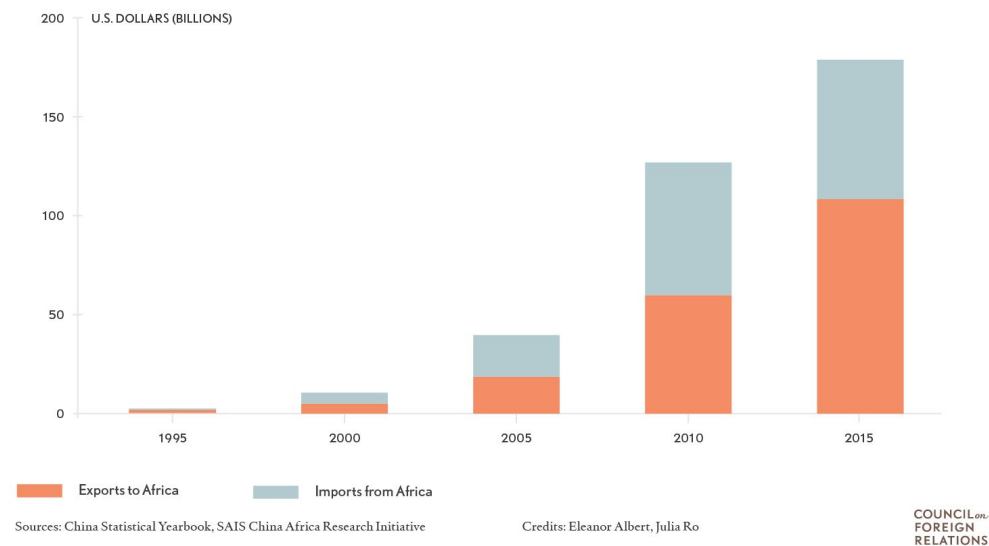
Wang Xuejun, a Chinese African security scholar noted “The driving thought of Western countries’ involvement in ‘peacebuilding’ is ‘liberal democracy’ through a realization of a democratic political system as a precondition for a country’s internal peace and stability. China believes that every country has its own priorities and to promote democratic systems immediately after the end of conflicts is not necessarily an

⁵ Hayoun, Massoud. 2013. "Strange Bedfellows." *World Affairs* (Jan/Feb):90-91.

⁶ Alden, Chris, and Daniel Large. 2015. "On Becoming a Norms Maker: Chinese Foreign Policy, Norms Evolution and the Challenges of Security in Africa." *The China Quarterly* 221 (March): 123.

immediate priority.”⁷ China’s policy vis-a-vis Africa is one that promotes stability and growth in order for China to have a steady supply of resources.

CHINA’S TRADE WITH AFRICA



This is consistent with Chinese foreign policy throughout history. China has been known for its ability to attract countries into its sphere of influence using its economy and its goods. Even when China’s navy was the greatest in the world, China did not resort to imperialism or colonialism, it simply allowed countries to come to it in search of goods as tributary states. During the Han Dynasty, this was referred to as the five baits. Then and now, Chinese foreign policy is about receiving deference and respect. Forcing values and ideologies is not in the Chinese DNA.

⁷ Chris Alden and Daniel Large, 130.

To give them ... elaborate clothes and carriages in order to corrupt their eyes; to give them fine food in order to corrupt their mouth; to give them music and women in order to corrupt their ears; to provide them with lofty buildings, granaries and slaves in order to corrupt their stomach ... and, as for those who come to surrender, the emperor [should] show them favor by honoring them with an imperial reception party in which the emperor should personally serve them wine and food so as to corrupt their mind. These are what may be called the five baits.⁸

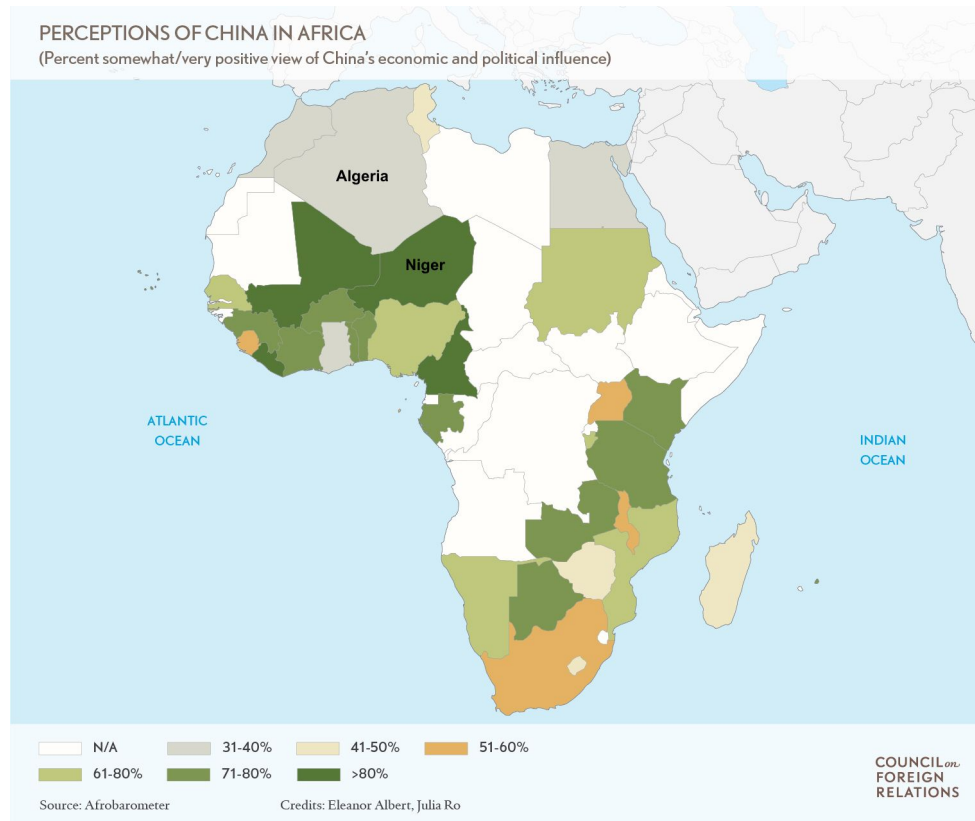
This strategy can clearly be seen in China's relationship with Africa. The key difference is that China has been branching out rather than allowing nations to approach it. China engages in what Howard French calls a "modern-day barter system."

⁹ China invests in development projects, provides aid, and provides cheap goods while African states agree to give China the natural resources it requires to support its massive population. Additional reasons why Africans may favor links with China is the boom in primary product exports to China from some African states. Technological advancements and diversification has meant that Chinese competition with African exports to third countries has drastically declined.¹⁰ The more these countries drift into the Chinese sphere, the tighter China's grip becomes without actual interference or intervention. This is the China model for African trade and diplomacy. However, as the image below suggests, the African reception of China's strategy is significantly more positive in some countries than in others.

⁸ Kissinger, Henry. *World Order*. New York: Penguin Books, 2014, 215.

⁹ French, Howard. *China's second continent*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014, 4.

¹⁰ Geda, Alemayehu and Atnafu Meskel, "China and India's growth surge: is it a curse or blessing for Africa? The case of manufactured exports," *African Development Review*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (2008), pp. 247-72.



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To understand the case studies and the reason for their selection, some background on both Niger and Algeria is necessary. These two culturally similar countries border each other and both have large trade flows with China. China has invested and provided aid to both.

Niger:

Niger is a large, underdeveloped country in northwestern Africa. It is landlocked and borders six other countries. It is a majority Muslim country that gained its independence from the French in 1960 and experienced some turbulent times in the

¹¹ Albert, Eleanor. 2017. "China in Africa."

subsequent few decades. It has been plagued by droughts and famines as well as locust outbreaks.¹² This has made development extremely difficult.

Its economy runs on exports of raw materials, namely uranium, oil, and gold. Niger's population is growing rapidly and so is its economy. Over the past 10 years, Niger has seen an average annual GDP growth of 5% and is expected to grow by about that much this year according to the World Bank. As of recent years, since the new constitution in 2010, Niger has been relatively politically stable. Niger holds elections and has peaceful transitions of power, but the instability on its borders have been presenting security challenges. Boko Haram and other Jihadist groups have been carrying out terrorist operations throughout the country and the disruption caused by refugee inflows from Nigeria, Chad, and Mali has further compounded Niger's pain. Niger is home to over 250,000 refugees and internationally displaced people that it struggles to care for.¹³ Niger has been forced to spend its money taking care of refugees, battling terrorism, providing services for its rapidly growing population, and rebuilding destroyed infrastructure rather than creating new infrastructure, bettering the quality of its services, and creating jobs.

Algeria:

Algeria is a developing country in the northwest of Africa. It borders seven countries, including Niger to its southwest. It is also a majority Muslim country and a former colony of France. It gained its independence just two years after Niger in 1962.

¹² The World Bank. 2018. World Development Indicators. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank (producer and distributor).

¹³ United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees Report, 2018.

The economies of the two nations were comparable until the mid-1970's when Algeria took off. Just how striking this growth was can be seen in the first graph below. Algeria has been an African poster child for human development since the Algerian civil war ended in 2002, a victory for the government over Islamist rebels. It has seen tremendous advances in life expectancy, average schooling, primary school enrollment rates, gender equality, which translates to a high HDI score. The policies that drove these increases have also contributed to high GDP growth.

Unfortunately, Algeria's economy is one dimensional. 95% of Algerian exports are petroleum in one form or another. Crude petroleum, petroleum gas, and refined petroleum drive exports, which means that falling commodity prices heavily impact Algeria's reserves. Growth has slowed with falling oil prices and the government has been taking steps, however small, to diversify its economy.¹⁴

By the Numbers:

Algeria and Niger have been diverging economically since the mid-1970's. This paper will not explain why that is but the relative difference in wealth between the two means that China's interactions with the two nations must be inherently different. Algeria boasts a \$159 billion GDP compared with a meager \$8 billion for Niger. Due to the educational reforms and social reforms undertaken by the Algerian government, 93% of Algerians make it to the end of primary school but only 65% of Nigeriens do. A similar, but significantly less stark contrast exists when the percentage of women in

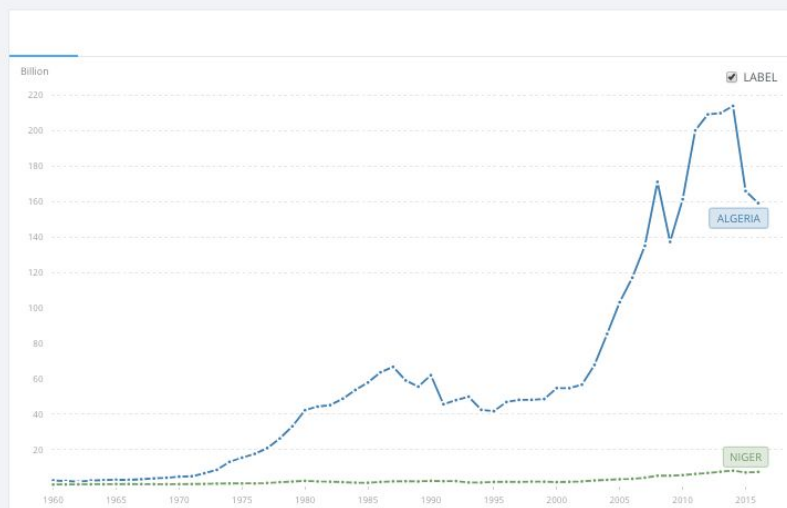
¹⁴ The World Bank. 2018. World Development Indicators. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank (producer and distributor).

school is measured; Algeria is closer to equality by a few percentage points. The annual growth rates of the two economies are exactly what should be expected from LDCs exporting natural resources. In both countries, there is high volatility due to commodity prices and international politics.

GDP (current US\$)

World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files.

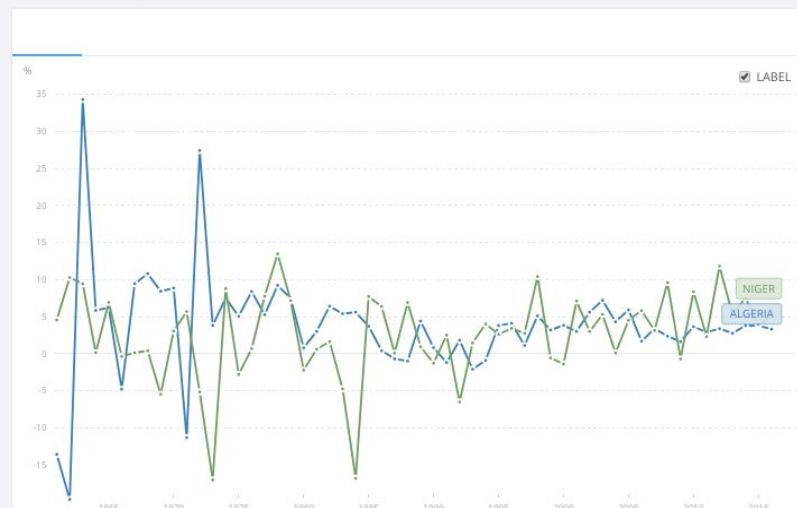
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GDP growth (annual %)

World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files.

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China in Algeria:

Algeria was one of the first handful of countries to establish diplomatic ties with China. This happened at the end of 1958, less than 10 years after Mao declared the People's Republic of China. At the time Algeria recognized China, the vast majority of those who recognized China were communist countries or members of the Soviet Bloc. Algeria was neither, just a developing country that saw a potential friendship in China.

¹⁵ The World Bank. 2018. World Development Indicators. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank (producer and distributor).

The ties remained strong and China even offered Algeria political support as it fought to get its independence from France. Between 1958 and 1962, the Algerian Civil War, China provided military assistance in the form of arms and military equipment. This was just another example of China playing the role of an LDC helping other LDCs fight colonialism. Post-independence, China again provided aid to Algeria. China sent wheat, steel, school supplies, and even planes and boats.¹⁶ Still, as noted earlier, this was a political relationship, not an economic one. As with Africa in general, Algeria would have to wait a few decades to begin trading with China.

Today, the relationship between the two nations is still strong. Trade and investment are still high, China still provides aid when needed and the governments remain close. The governments refer to each other as old friends and it seems that official mouthpieces of the Chinese government only have positive things to say about Algeria. Why then, is the overall perception of China so overwhelmingly negative in Algeria?

One reason is the way that China invests and builds in Algeria. China builds massive projects and often uses a majority of its own workers. This has prompted Algeria to pass quota laws on Chinese workers working on Chinese projects. In some nations, this is received well due to a lack of literate, educated, and skilled workers. In Algeria, its educational and social reforms have drastically helped its workforce prepare to work on more advanced projects. In essence, Algerians feel that Chinese are taking their jobs. The number of Chinese workers in Algeria peaked in 2009 at over 50,000

¹⁶ Calabrese, John. 2017. "Sino-Algerian Relations: On a Path to Realizing Their Full Potential?"

workers. Secondly, Algeria was seen as an opportunity for Chinese migrants to stay and make a life there. Until 2011, before Algeria's economy began to contract, China's GDP per capita was lower than Algeria's. This reality compounded with China's excellent school system and high literacy rates meant that young Chinese migrants could potentially find higher wages and better jobs in Algerian cities. Many Chinese migrants stayed in Algeria and created their own communities; this was known in some African countries as the "Chinese migrant invasion."¹⁷ This fear is half correct. The number of Chinese migrants has been in decline since 2013, however, the new age of migrants are coming for different reasons. Liu Haifang, an Africa relations scholar from Peking University said in 2015 that "There is a new direction. Those heading to Africa will no longer be traders and labourers, they will be in business services heading to countries that have closer industrial co-operation with China"¹⁸

China was seen as the hero when it was just providing aid and necessities, but as it began to extend its reach into the country via migrants and lopsided resource extraction deals, things went awry. Another point of contention is the Djamaa El Djazair mosque and Algeria's East-West Highway project. The \$1.3 billion mosque project contract was given to a Chinese state-owned enterprise and will bring in about 7,000 Chinese workers to build alongside 10,000 Algerians.¹⁹ This project has garnered widespread attention from Algerians and from the larger Muslim world due to how

¹⁷ Sautman, Barry, Yan Hairong. 2009. "African Perspectives on China–Africa Links." *The China Quarterly* 199: 733.

¹⁸ "Chinese return from Africa as migrant population peaks," *Financial Times*, August 27, 2017.

¹⁹ Hayoun, Massoud. 89

ambitious the plans are. The mosque will be the third largest mosque in the world and will feature the worlds tallest minaret.

The sentiment of Muslim Algerians in regards to the mosque was most aptly summed up by *El Watan* reader and commenter, fares31, when he wrote “Can we entrust an atheist enterprise from an atheist state that represses its own Uighur minority in Xinjiang to construct a mosque here in Algeria? What glory and what blessing will we get from this project—constructing a mosque as an act of faith that will reinforce the oppression of our Uighur brothers at the cost of a billion dollars?”²⁰ China’s foray into building non-necessities comes as Algeria reaches a level of development where it can begin to diversify the way it spends its funds. Many Algerians see the mosque as a waste of money, not only because the Chinese are being paid to build it, but also because 7,000 Chinese workers are entering the country to build it. While there is a religious component to the comment by fares31 and the treatment of Muslim Uighurs in China does play a role in African perceptions of China, it will later be explained why this is not as important as the comment implies.

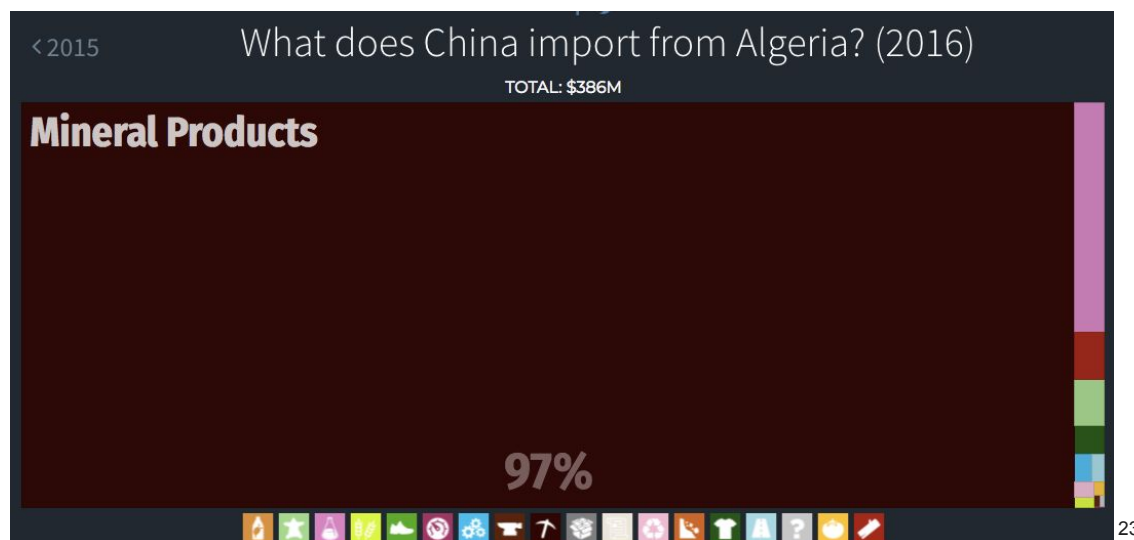
Another reason for the Algerian anger at China is one that carries weight around the globe, trade. China accounts for only 1.1% of Algerian exports but a whopping 18% of Algerian imports.²¹ While many Algerians are excited at the prospect of cheap goods and technology, the country feels that it is being exploited and that gains from trade are only benefitting the rich. As the graph below shows, China’s imports from Algeria are virtually all petroleum.²² This is in line with Algeria’s export market worldwide however

²⁰ Hayoun, Massoud. 96

²¹ "Country Profile: Algeria." The Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2018.

²² “Mineral Products” includes: Refined Petroleum, Crude Petroleum, & Petroleum Gas.

its exports to China are modest. While other African countries benefit immensely from China's resource extraction in the short run, Algeria does not seem to be gaining much.



China in Niger:

A latecomer to diplomatic relations with China, Niger established ties with China in 1974. Aside from a brief 4 year period during which Niger opened diplomatic channels with Taiwan, the relationship has been smooth. China's footprint in Niger has been relatively modest, with most of the interactions being through aid. China often aids Niger with disaster relief, funds, and food. As recently as April 2018, Chinese state news outlet, Xinhua, published an article titled "China Aids Niger With Disaster Relief Grain: Chinese Friends Always First to Extend a Hand."²⁴ Although the article was simply a fluff piece meant to paint China in a positive light for a mere \$1 million donation

²³ "Country Profile: Algeria." The Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2018.

²⁴ "中国援尼日尔救灾粮 尼方：中国朋友总是最先伸援手" [China Aids Niger With Disaster Relief Grain: Chinese Friends Always First to Extend a Hand]. 2018.

of grain, it shows, at the very least, China's perception of its relationship with Niger. In the article, the Chinese ambassador to Niger stressed the importance of the Chinese government maintaining a strong relationship with Niger.

Although the total value of trade is quite small, they are as to be expected when trading with such a small economy. China represents 5.3% of all Nigerien exports and 16% of all Nigerien imports.²⁵ While the trade balance is still negative, it is not as lopsided as Chinese trade with Algeria in amount or percentage. In addition, Chinese trade with Niger is more diverse and allows Niger to create jobs in more industries. Although the vast majority of Niger's exports China are sesame seeds, Niger still exports refined cotton, clothes, batteries, construction equipment and processed potatoes.²⁶

In 2016, China constructed roads, a second bridge on the river Niger, multiple water projects, and donated medical training equipment. China's big achievement that year, however, was the Niamey General Referral Hospital. This hospital is being touted as the biggest and most high tech hospital in Western Africa. The project came with a \$68 million price tag and was celebrated by Nigerien officials. Niger's deputy foreign minister El Back Zeinabou Tari Bako praised the move, saying "African countries should continue supporting the implementation of projects agreed upon during the Johannesburg Forum for the benefit of our states,"²⁷

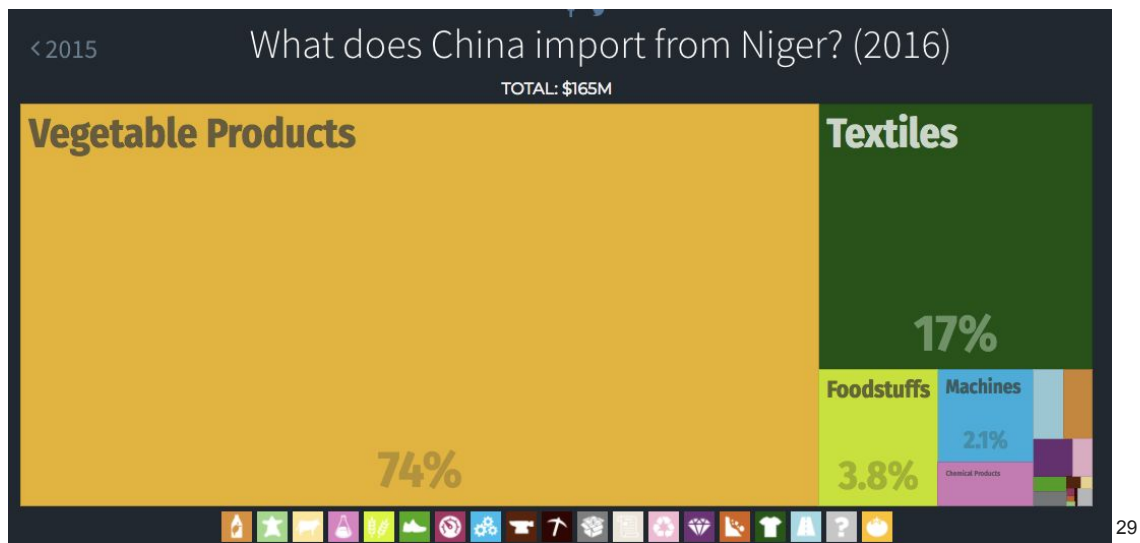
While there are no published official statistics on Chinese migrant workers in Niger, the only estimate available comes from the South African Institute of International

²⁵ "Country Profile: Niger." The Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2018.

²⁶ "Vegetable Products" consists of: Sesame reeds, Rice, and Teas

²⁷ Xin, Xu. 2016. "China offers aid to development projects in Niger."

Affairs and pegs the number of Chinese migrants in Niger at just 1,000.²⁸ If this statistic is accurate and based on the 80%+ positive views of China in Niger, China exists only as a force for good in Niger. China helps fund their agricultural sector through rice, tea, cotton, and sesame seeds, while also assisting its industrial sector. The only information on China in Niger is positive and related to trade, aid, and political support.



Zambia:

Many scholars have debated the influence of media and the political alignment of an African government on the views of China and Chinese people. Barry Sautman and Yan Hairong effectively argue that while politicians and media may try to frame issues in a certain way to garner support, African viewpoints are developed in the real world and

²⁸ Park, Yoon J. 2009. *Chinese Migration in Africa*. South African Institute of International Affairs, 24.

²⁹ "Country Profile: Niger." The Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2018.

everyday life more than through media. China and the US enjoy very cordial and close relationship.

One example given is Zambia, a small, United States aligned, Christian country in southern Africa. Mineworkers and other Zambians working in the resource extraction industry often face unsafe working conditions and extremely low wages. This is especially true for Chinese owned firms or joint ventures including Chinese firms. Politicians and the media often portray these conditions as characteristic of Chinese people and companies. Rather than report these conditions as firms cutting corners, Zambian media paints an image of Chinese people and firms as cheap and exploitative.

³⁰ One would expect this to drastically decrease the positive views of China. However, referring back to the map, above with perceptions of China, Zambia is still between 71% and 80% positive.³¹

Despite the negative press, Zhou Yuxiao, the Chinese ambassador shut down the complaints by saying, "Among all nations, I think China is doing the best at getting resources from countries and putting back into those countries, can you find any other country that is doing better?" And when asked about the involvement of the United States, Zhou replied, "You employ local people and put them as observers at each and every polling station. What else? I haven't seen any roads being built by them, any schools, any hospitals that really touch people, that can last, that can serve society for long. Maybe training election people is your biggest contribution."³²

³⁰ Sautman, Barry, Yan Hairong. 2009. "African Perspectives on China–Africa Links." *The China Quarterly* 199: 757.

³¹ Council on Foreign Relations

³² French, Howard W. 2011. "In Africa, an Election Reveals Skepticism of Chinese Involvement."

Zhou Yuxiao tapped into two reasons for the positive reception of China with his responses. China produces results in Zambia and China is unconditionally supportive. The Chinese human footprint is not very significant but the investment and aid that China pours in addresses real needs of Zambian people. The infrastructure China builds affects people in real ways throughout their daily lives. Zhou's second response strikes at the unconditionality of China's support for Zambia. When western countries invest in and aid LDCs, they also come with conditionalities related to the internal affairs of the recipient country.

Chinese Aid:

China provides a large amount of aid to African countries. From 2000 to 2011 alone, Chinese investment in Africa grew from \$210 million to \$3.17 billion.³³ This aid fills a real need in many African countries, democratic, authoritarian, or otherwise. This is one reason poor countries are attracted to China in the first place. Many Chinese projects require large investments and long pay-back terms that traditional donors are reluctant to provide.³⁴ China truly hopes to help Africa achieve better development while avoiding conditionalities based on human rights, good governance, or democratic ideals. In addition, Chinese aid is successful at boosting economic growth in recipient countries. AidData's report benchmarked the effectiveness of Chinese aid against the World Bank, the United States, and all of the members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee(OECD-DAC).

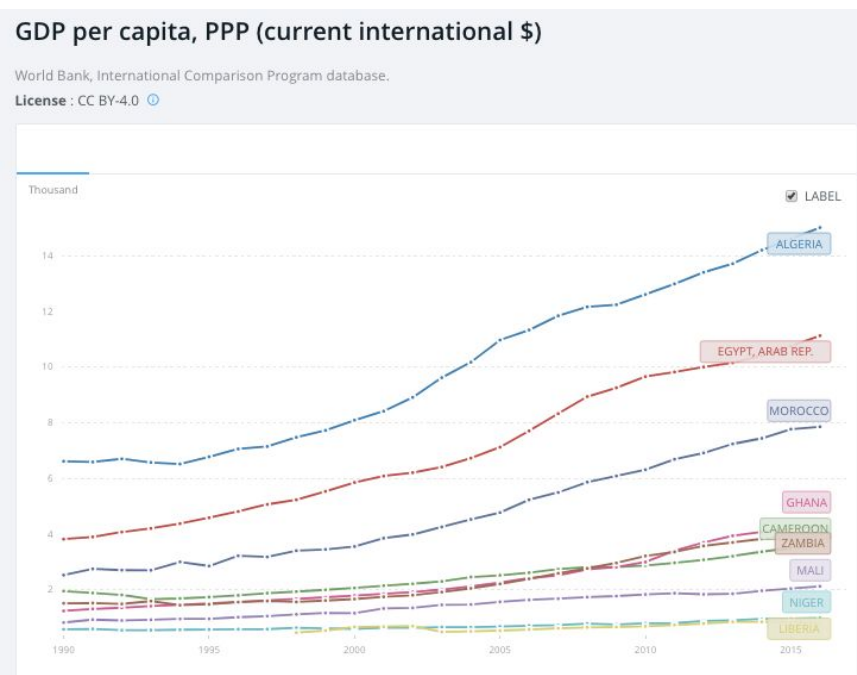
³³ "Report on Development of China's Outward Investment and Economic Cooperation, 2011-2012," [中国对外投资合作发展报告], Ministry of Commerce, December 2012.

³⁴ Sun, Yan. 2014. The Brookings Institution "China's Aid to Africa: Monster or Messiah?".

The results found that loans from all of these sources, except for the World Bank, provided similar growth effects on the recipient countries' economies. The report even refuted the idea that Chinese aid and influence reduced the effectiveness of western aid. This essentially means that when China and the West both provide aid to a country, they can double their benefit.³⁵

Conclusions:

From the Council on Foreign Relations and World Bank data, of the four countries with a more than 80% positive view of China, the richest is ranked 26th(Cameroon) out of 54 African countries in GDP per capita. The rest ranked 34th(Mali), 49th(Niger), and 50th(Liberia) out of 54. Of those four African countries with a less than 40% positive view of China, three are in the top fifteen: Algeria(6th), Egypt(8th), and Morocco(13th). The fourth is Ghana, which sits at #18 on the list. Looking at the case studies in a larger context, religion does not seem to play as much of a role as scholars initially suggested. The graph to the right shows the GDP per capita of the eight countries mentioned above. In the year 2016,



³⁵ Dreher, A., Fuchs, A., Parks, B.C., Strange, A. M., & Tierney, M. J. (2017). *Aid, China, and Growth: Evidence from a New Global Development Finance Dataset*. AidData Working Paper #46. Williamsburg, VA: AidData: 26.

the top four countries all had a lower than 40% positive view of China. The bottom four had a higher than 80% positive view. Zambia, it is worth noting, falls right with the other countries that have a highly positive view of China. Despite, all of the reasons one would think that Zambia would not have a positive view, it is poor enough that China produces results and its people don't stay.

A rising incidence of transnational human flows between China and Africa, particularly in the growing number of small Chinese family businesses that have been set up all over Africa, is a particularly visible manifestation of the larger complex of burgeoning contact and involvement; the Chinese family shop is where the most Africans directly experience the Chinese presence in Africa.³⁶

A common thread throughout scholarly articles that have attempted to dissect the relationship between China and Africa is that there are multiple levels of Chinese engagement. Chinese state-owned enterprises behave differently than Chinese entrepreneurs or the Chinese government itself.³⁷ While China's SOEs may have a plan to enter and exit a country quickly, savvy entrepreneurs may have other plans. This makes for a difficult issue in wealthier countries with more opportunities for Chinese to succeed.

Finally, especially in the poorer countries of Africa, much of the official data needed for a more thorough analysis is lacking. The states themselves often do not have the information themselves to hand over to scholars or researchers. Julia C. Strauss and Martha Saavedra emphasized the troubles of doing research of this type in

³⁶ Sautman, Barry, Yan Hairong. 2009. "African Perspectives on China–Africa Links." *The China Quarterly* 199: 556

³⁷ Strauss, Julia C., Martha Saavedra, 552.

their further research section of their paper. “There is a crying need for more comparative work that considers differences and similarities in the China–Africa relationship *within* Africa. More ethnographically based paired comparison or multi-country survey work will begin to get to grips with this large question of variation, but the very significant investments of time in the study of multiple languages and time spent in the field make this kind of work very difficult to carry through to completion.”³⁸

In summation, China’s goals in Africa remain the same throughout the continent. China aims to secure resources for its massive population, promote growth in Africa, and expand its sphere of influence. China achieves this through aid and investment in infrastructure. China, however, can not treat all countries the same and the determining factors appear to be the wealth and stability of a nation. In poor countries, Chinese workers come, build, and leave the country a better place. In wealthier countries, Chinese workers often overstay their welcome. They see the opportunity that wealthier countries have so they build communities, start businesses and take away opportunities from locals. Finally, in poorer countries, China focuses on much-needed infrastructure, such as roads, schools, hospitals, bridges etc... In richer countries, China can branch out into other, potentially controversial, projects.

³⁸ Strauss, Julia C., Martha Saavedra, 561.

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