



Redefining African Autonomy in the Global South: Lessons from Niger.

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ABSTRACT

In the past five decades, development cooperation has witnessed both structural and systematic changes. The former, South-South Cooperation framework was an emancipatory catalyst and a tool for progressive development for marginalized and subjugated countries of the “South”. The effectual SSC multilateralism and collective action resulted in the both economic and political autonomy and agency of the “South “. The latter, Global South recognizes the importance of strategic partnerships and pushes for greater development beyond geographical locations. Post-Millennium Global South has however declined to be just a political construct and a geostrategic tool for national interest attainment and foreign policy prospects of the elite few. Within the segmentation of the Global South, Africa has always been an important supply chain and strategic partner to both Rising and Emerging Powers. Outside the backdrop of the ideological “Rising Africa” discourse, Africa is still struggling plethora development challenges than any other continent in the Global South besides it being the world’s richest continent in mineral reserves. Besides the dichotomy of extortionists principles that govern cooperation and gains, there is the issue of post-colonial burdens that have been stifling Africa’s development prospects. African countries still bear the weight of post-colonial influence and control through North-South Cooperation which is still primary to SSC. Niger is one of the many such countries in Africa, despite having Africa’s highest grade ores, Niger is the 7th world’s poorest country primarily because of predatory cooperation from the European Union countries including France. Besides the unconventional dethroning of the Nigerien government and pushing France out, Niger has since evolved to be the fastest growing economy in Africa. This fiscal growth which stands at 11% is all attributed to both political reforms and strategic partnerships. The prospects of this study is to investigate Niger’s political realignments and their implications, to dissect its emerging strategic partnerships and their geopolitical implications and lastly to assess the lessons that other African countries can learn about autonomy from Niger within the premise of democracy.

Keywords: Global South, Africa, Niger, North-South Cooperation, Economic Autonomy

Introduction

In the last two decades the “Rising Africa” discourse within the Global South has grown to fame as a paradigm shift in how the continent is perceived and engaged within the Global South and beyond. It encapsulates a multifaceted narrative centered on the continent’s emergence as a focal player in the global affairs, economics, and socio-political dynamics. It also acknowledges and celebrates Africa’s growing influence, resilience, dynamism and economic potential while acknowledging the complexities and nuances of its development journey. This discourse represents a different trajectory and transition from historical narratives that depicted Africa through the lens of poverty, conflict, underdevelopment and weak corrupt government systems.

At the core, the Rising Africa discourse emphasizes the continent’s remarkable economic growth, fueled by factors such as natural resource exploitation, urbanization, infrastructural development and the expansion of science technology which has opened doors of collaboration and cooperation in international trade and commerce. Moreover, African nations are applauded for their increasing role as key players in shaping global economic trends and investment strategies. The discourse underscores Africa’s evolving political landscape, characterized by burgeoning democratic ethos, greater political stability, and improved governance structures. There is plethora documentation on the reduction in armed conflicts and authoritarian regimes, paving the way for increased political participation, human rights advocacy and social progress. Within this premise the most prominent narrative is that African nations are also increasingly asserting their voices and interests on the global stage, advocating for greater representation and decision-making power within the international institutions and forums.

Many other scholars have used the term “Rising Africa” particularly to connote democratization and a new phase of African Autonomy. In contrast Pan African scholarship has questioned and criticized the concept and labelled it “myopic” and “illusive” in the sense that Africa is still economically marginalized and politically underrepresented in the international fora. They argue that there also no substantial evidence that shows that GDP growth has any impact on the condition and live hoods of most Africans. This viewpoint is influenced by the fact that the concept often refers to the emergence of only a handful African economies as significant players in the international arena, with rapid economic growth and development, industrialization and economic diversification. Countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, Ghana and Rwanda among many other. These few countries are not member states of any significant political institution except the G77, and South Africa in the G20 and BRICS. Additionally, these countries have more adverse developmental changes despite their economic growth. For instance, the World Bank (2022) asserts that approximately 40% of Nigerian population lives

below the national poverty line, countries like South Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo have even more higher percentages and these are Africa's energy giants. South Africa, and Kenya have the highest levels of national debt in terms of debt-GDP ratio, South Africa holds the world record in youth unemployment rates at an estimated 50 % rate, Niger holds the world record of being the top producer of uranium and also ranked 4th in the world's poorest countries in terms of GDP per capita, human development indicators and other measures of economic development. Moreover, even though democracy is said to be a prerequisite for development, Africa has the longest history of democratic collapse and erosion that is exacerbated by both internal and external factors. This has posed severe challenges to the rule of law, impeded economic development and social progresses, exacerbated corruption and lack of transparency in governance, weakened and disabled the democratic institutions and eroded civil liberties among others. Fragile States as well as Stable countries in Africa are experiencing plethora development challenges that makes this "Rising Africa" narrative just a white man's idea but far from reality.

The consensus however is that democratic attainment, peace-building and economic resuscitation has proven to be a multi stakeholder endeavor that need multifaceted approaches over a prolonged period, there has been a lot of set-back and spillovers that has stifled that prospect in many African countries. One of the challenges has been the continuous role that external development players and institutions play in intensifying the repercussions of instability and underdevelopment in Africa. The burning argument is that Africa cannot self-isolate because it is not self-dependent and there is truth in that but the real question is how international cooperation and collaboration has helped Africa?

It is a well-known fact that Africa has always been an important supply chain and within the geopolitical radar to many countries of the West since the colonial period. Even in the current dynamic, the West and the North's overcapacity in expertise, technology and finances is likewise an important element in Africa's development within the premise of North-South Cooperation. With changing world order and shifting geopolitical interests, the dynamics and value of development cooperation has however declined and Africa has been collateral to that cooperation. African minerals have not been able to lift Africa from multidimensional poverty and underdevelopment because of extortionists and predatory principles that govern international trade and cooperation between Africa and the West and the North. Africa is an important supply chain to the rest of the world and in return does not have anything tangible to show for it, and it is the post-colonial occupancy and influence of the West and North in the continent that will ensure that Africa remains poor for decades to come.

NIGER'S POLITICAL REALIGNMENTS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS.

Niger like many African countries is one of the richest countries in mineral resources but has been the poorest for decades, with the lowest human development index, multi-generational poverty, insurgency and terrorism issues among many other socio-economic challenges. France and other EU countries, and the West have been benefactors of Nigerien mineral cooperation and the reciprocal and uncomplimentary nature of this cooperation has had a direct impact on Niger's economy for decades and inherently the quality of life of every Nigerien.

The historical relationship between France and Niger dates back to the colonial period when Niger was part of French West Africa. France colonized Niger in the 19th century as part of its broader imperial expansion into Africa and Niger was initially administered as part of French Sudan which is now Mali but later became a separate colony known as Niger in 1922. During the colonial era, France established control over Niger's territory, exploiting its natural resources including its uranium, gold, and other minerals. The colonial administration imposed forced labour and taxation systems and policies that prioritized French interest over the welfare of locals and these practices contributed to widespread poverty and social unrest among the local population.

In 1916-1917 there was a Kaocen Ag Mohammed resistance led by Tuareg leader against French exploitation and oppression. After World War 2, there were growing movements for independence across Africa, including Niger. In 1958, Niger became an autonomous republic within the French Community and achieved full independence on August 3, 1960. Hamani Diourou became the country's first president, and Niger joined the ranks of newly independent African nations. Despite gaining independence, Niger maintained close ties with France, particularly in areas of defence, economic development, mineral exploration and cultural exchange. France provided financial aid, technical assistance, and military support to Niger, which helped stabilize the newly independent country and fostered economic growth.

In the post-independence era, Niger experienced periods of political instability, including military coups and authoritarian rule. France maintained diplomatic relations with Niger and continued to be an important ally partnering in development initiatives and regional security efforts despite allegations of neo-colonialism., where many accused France and other colonial actors and foreign actors of maintaining influence and control over the country's economy and resources. Critics pointed out that France is maintaining influence and control over the country's economy and resources particularly uranium, to the detriment of the local population.

Aljazeera (2023) asserts that even-though Niger has a history of coups, in recent years there has been protests and calls for greater transparency and accountability in Niger's mining expeditions with France, including demands for fairer revenue-sharing agreements and environmental protections. Some activists and civil society organization have also criticized French multinational cooperation in Niger for their perceived role in exacerbating poverty, environmental degradation and social inequality. As a result, Niger has had coups in 1974, 1996, 1999, 2010 and the latest on in 2023. Villalón, L.A. (2023) asserts that Niger's coup in 2023 did not come as a surprise because Niger is prone to coups which are triggered by different political and economic crises. The latest military coup that is still in power happened in March 17, 2023, only two years after President Muhammed Bazoum was voted in to power with claims of poor governance and degraded security situation in Niger. Niger has since gone through a lot of transition since then which has had both negative as well as positive implications.

Since the coup, there has been leadership transition, as on July 28, 2023, the head of Niger's presidential guard, General Abdourahmane Tchiani, ousted the sitting president Mohamed Bazoum and declared himself head of state after the military seized power, he suspended the democratic processes and institutions including the constitution, parliament and elections. That was met with a lot of condemnation from both international and regional communities. In response to that development the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) imposed tonnes of sanctions on Niger threatened to employ military Intervention if democracy is not restored. These sanctions did have a lot of economic impacts on Niger's economy, affecting trade and investments and denting a lot of its international relationships.

With rising anti-France sentiments and brewing tensions between France and its former colonies, the new leadership cut ties with France and asked France to evacuate, there was however initially a pushback from France, in which following intense dialogue France agreed to vacate. According to Reuters (2023) the Nigerien Juntas also expelled the French ambassador from Niamey which halted all diplomatic relations between the two parties and the last batch of French soldiers vacated their stations in December 2023. This development was a gate way to regional convergence, there was an emergence of a new bloc of countries that aligned with Niger and pledged to support it and retaliate if ECOWAS attacks Niger or exercise any physical power. Mali and Burkina Faso were initially part of the 2017 - G5 Sahel Force.i.e. Group of five countries (G5) plus France, which ultimately collapsed due to the fall out with France and its former colonies. Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger later formed a military alliance called the Association of Sahel States (AES) which is for defending the bloc's interests. In January 2024 they all revoked their membership in ECOWAS due to accusations of illegal, illegitimate, inhumane and irresponsible sanctions ECOWAS imposed on them after their coups. France departure from Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso allowed these countries to assert their sovereignty and take full control of their political, economic, social affairs.

With reduced external influence, a new opportunity for accelerated regional cooperation was created between Niger and the newly acclaimed military governments. After ECOWAS imposed sanctions on Niger, that led to delays, increased costs and suspension of trade activities with neighbouring countries and other international partners. Niger's shortcoming was met with support from Burkina Faso and Mali who opened their borders and ports to Niger for its trade expeditions to continue. With France gone, there were an emergence of new alliances and a call for even stronger ties between Niger and other international development partners like Russia and China who were overshadowed by France's presence in the region. The two giants expanded their influence and engagement in the region through diverse projects varying from economic development, security dynamics and geopolitical prospects.

1.1a. CHANGES THAT LED TO NIGER'S ECONOMIC TRAJECTORY

As a former colony, Niger used to export its uranium to France for processing at a fee due to France mineral beneficiation capacity and advanced nuclear industry. After the coup took over the new governance changed that arrangement and stated that Niger will now develop its own uranium processing capabilities, to add value to its natural resources, for more returns. Schwikowski, M. and Sandner, P. (2023) highlights the unequal returns between Niger and France; giving reference to Mr Mahaman Laouan Gaya, a former Nigerien energy minister and the Organization of African Petroleum Producers (APPO) who once reiterated on the significant inconsistencies stating the 63 % French and 37 % Niger ownership in Uranium expeditions. Point in case is from 2010 where Niger exported uranium worth €3.5 billion (\$3.8 billion) to but received only €459 million in return. This is taking into account that 70% of France energy needs came from Niger while 90% of Nigerien population had no electricity. The price exploitation was one of the core reasons that are contested by the juntas because as far as Nigerien have great impacts in France, Niger does not have basic resources for its citizens.

There was also a change of policies as far as mineral beneficiation is concerned, Niger was adamant in developing its uranium beneficiation locally, Parens, R. (2023) asserts that uranium ore makes up a 75 percent of Niger's foreign exports and after the coup, since the leadership transition Niger has significantly increased the price of its uranium from 0.80 euros/kg to 200 euro/kg in order to match its market price from other producers worldwide which has led to economic dividends and much traction in Niger's economic stance. This shift reflects the Nigerien junta's interest in redefining its relationship with France or any other western states which benefited from cheap uranium purchased in Niger. This shift in affairs has catapulted Niger's economy to whooping 11% growth in months, and there is anticipation for more GDP growth in Niger if there is any level of internal stability.

France expelled from Niger was a great judgement call in different levels because pro-western government led by former president Bazoum had mining and export policies that were not essentially beneficial to Niger. France had the right of preference over every export from Niger as its former colony i.e. everything that Niger produces, France chooses first and it can only be passed on to other countries if France doesn't want it. The new government cancelled that as it forged new and strategically important relationships that were based on the principles of mutual reciprocity and complementarity.

In the interest of political sovereignty and national interest, outside the scope of economic cooperation, more pragmatic political changes have also taken place. Upon France's expulsion, Niger had defence and security arrangements with France for training Nigerien military, the new leadership cancelled that and instructed the French military to exit Niger. This also implied that multiple classified agreements with France in terms of defence and intelligent sharing has also been dissolved. Additionally, as a former French colony Niger used to send annual reports to France, particularly in areas such as governance, security and economic development, and with severed ties the new government cancelled that, and this is an indication of some level of political autonomy and agency as Niger asset its rights both locally and internationally. Ferdjani, H. (2024) asserts There are also official reports of Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali possibly parting ways with the West African franc (CFA). This comes after Captain Ibrahim Traore, leader of the Burkinabe transitional government, said in an interview in February 2024. "More changes might still surprise you. And it's not just about currency. We will break all ties that keep us in slavery. "and within days his Nigerien counterpart, Abdourahmane Tchiani, confirmed that a major monetary shake-up could be in the offing. "Currency is a sign of sovereignty. The AES member states are engaged in the process of recovering their full sovereignty. It is no longer acceptable for our states to be France's cash cow," he said in an interview with the state broadcaster.

If this happens, and these states manages to transition away from the currency tie to the French treasury, there is anticipation of a more refined autonomy in all aspects, more especially economically. According to Conrad, J. (2022) This currency transition surfaced in 2019 when the African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) announced plans to reform the CFA Franc and rename it the Eco, with the intention of eventually cutting ties with French treasury. The currency which is used by Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo have been in use since 1945 and have been retained post-independence. The CFA is managed by the Central Bank of West African States, which is also known as the BCEAO, but with strong support from France, the trick is a board member of the BCEAO is a Bank of France representative with a veto vote. The WAEMO policy has been criticized by many for being exploitative because it requires its member states to give 50 per cent of their foreign reserves to France, so exiting the CFA Franc arrangement may present a great opportunity for more sustainable economies as that money is now ceded towards sustainable development projects. Leaving has also posed challenges as there is a need to find a viable replacement to peg the currency into, that's why maybe even though the Eco was proposed to be launched in 2020, even today the transition has not yet occurred.

1.2. NIGER'S EMERGING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND GEOPOLITICS

When the military coup led by General Abdourahamane Tiani ceased power in July 2023, there was backlash and condemnation from both local and international players. The United States which has developed a positive relationship over security cooperation and development assistance with Niger, greatly condemned the takeover and according to Schmitt, E. (2023) the state department spokesman, Matthew Miller stated in an official report that the United States will halt all economic and military aid that was offered to Niger until and unless democracy is restored. The US\$200 million of aid and the US\$442 million in trade and agricultural assistance was suspended indefinitely in August 2023.

Other stakeholders like The West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) imposed stringent sanctions and froze Nigerien state assets as reported by WION News (2023) The bloc suspended all commercial dealings with Niger and froze its state assets and enterprises in the regional central bank and commercial banks including suspension of financial aid from all regional development banks. After the sanctions the pre-planned bond insurance amounting to US\$51 by the regional central bank was also cancelled while the West Africa's regional central bank and other banks like the BCEAO, closed down their branches in Niger due to risk in operation.

The European Union which has been committed to supporting Niger to improve its governance, education and promote sustainable growth also suspended its financial support and security cooperation which was allocated US\$554 Million for the years of 2021 to 2024. With reference to WION News (2023) Financial institutions like the World Bank also suspended financial reimbursement in Niger until further notice, with the exception of private sector partnerships which will proceed with caution, Niger has one of the largest World Bank portfolios in Africa, amounting to \$4.5 billion, and it also received \$600 million in direct budget support from the lender between 2022 and 2023.

With sanctions and financial and humanitarian aid withdrawn, it was imperative for Niger to make strategically important ties and strengthen existing ones to mitigate the repercussions of such. ACLED (2023) asserts that even though the military junta's power and legitimacy building is not guaranteed, Niger has successfully managed to gain the loyalty and support of a few countries who pledged their allegiance and support to Niger. Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and Central African Republic refused to apply sanction imposed by ECOWAS on Niger. Burkina Faso and Mali further issued a warning in a joint statement that any military intervention in Niger was a declaration of war against the two countries and in January they left the ECOWAS Bloc. Benin joined in five months later and lifted its suspension of imported goods transiting to Niger through Port of Cotonou, it is through the same route that Niger transits its uranium and thorium ore, refined petroleum, radioactive chemicals and gold exports to both regional and international markets like France, United Arab Emirates, Canada, China and other African countries like Mali, Burkina Faso and Benin. The sanctions imposed on Niger has actually strengthened the alliances between countries with military governance and accelerated different facets of cooperation.

Back in July 2023, two weeks after the military juntas took over, the Nigeriens flooded the streets raising pro-Russian banners and the Russian flags in solidarity and affirmation of Russia in Niger and soliciting for stronger ties to replace the declining West and retrieving North. Russia has always been an active player in the world stage and that is underscored by its military presence and intervention internationally and in the African region. With swirling "anti-colonial/western" narrative or "anti-French sentiments" Russia has since articulated firmly its support to African countries to fight neo-colonialism and capitalism, and problematized the engagement of the West and the North in the region and pledged to offer a more superior alternative. With security concerns of insurgency and terrorism in the Sahelian belt, Moscow has since upped its cooperation in the region through military training and providing security through the Wagner mercenary group, most specifically in Burkina Faso, Mali, Sudan, Central African Republic.

Russia has since made Niger's transition, its geopolitical anchor for soft power diffusion, with the Wagner Group establishing presence in Niger, Moscow's influence in the region was inevitable. The new military regimes have also aligned with Russia and this strategic alliance is exhibited through diplomatic, economic and military cooperation as well as resource related interests. Military cooperation which is a much more potent element is executed through training of troops, guarding mineral resources and suppressing dissent against the national rulers. with reference to Szymanski-Burgos, A, and Meisel, C, (2023) following the Russia-Ukraine war back in 2022, a lot of sanctions were also imposed on Russia. These includes economic sanctions by the European Union which targeted the core sectors like defence, energy and finance, the United States also imposed sanctions and travel bans on Russia, the United Nations froze Russian assets and travel bans to individuals and entities. The sanctions imposed on Russia dented its geopolitical and geo-economical dividends so Africa's exports and trade options are potential avenues for economic growth for Moscow. Exploring trade options in West Africa also allows Russia to put direct pressure on Africa about the detrimental western engagement in the continent which will afford Moscow the chance to explore development options outside the sphere of western influence.

Niger coup changed a lot of bilateral dynamics and curved a new trajectory for most of the partners in cooperation. China and Niger relationship likewise has been changed by the sudden turn of events. France's evacuation in the country created space for China to exercise its geopolitical interest which include to legitimize its hybrid development model as well as to expand its geostrategic radius in core sectors especially mining, uncontested. According to Reuters (2023) France relied on 50% of Niger's uranium for 70% of its nuclear power and uses some 9,700 tonnes of uranium oxide concentrate (8,200 tonnes of uranium) per year for its electricity generation. France was a main development partner in uranium exploration because of its mineral benefaction and processing capacities.

Niger's forceful evacuation of France left a gap for China to fill in both uranium and oil sectors. China's non-interference and non-conditionality is still solid and a merit to its Sino-Africa relations, China's Ministry of Commerce has reiterated its desire to expand its cooperation through China's state owned companies like the China National and China National Nuclear Corporation which will extend existing deals in Niger. In 2022 NPC and CNNC invested a sum of US\$4.6 billion and later US\$480 million in extractive industries respectively. There is also one project in the northern part of Niger that was halted and abandoned for almost a decade due to global market condition but now the CNUC is reconsidering because of favourable uranium prices and this translates to more economic dividends to both Niger and China. There is however no anticipation that there will be new development players in Niger, because of risks involved but there is a chance in expansion of cooperation for players who are already present in the country.

1.3. WHAT CAN AFRICA LEARN ABOUT AUTONOMY FROM NIGER WITHIN THE PREMISE OF DEMOCRACY.

Evans, P. B. (1971) asserts that national autonomy which is the ability of a nation-state as a collectively to make decisions which shape its political and economic future, is an integral part that promotes sustainable development by protecting national interests, ensuring sovereignty, and fostering strategic international cooperation. Majority of African countries however still struggle with plethora structural and systematic challenges that are detrimental to both political and economic autonomy. Upon exploring the intersections of autonomy and governance, African countries especially in the Sahelian belt have patrimonial governments which have a direct impact on their economic growth and contributes to other socio-economic challenges like widespread corruption which has been the main factor that undermines the democratic processes and the rule of law. Mismanagement of natural resources is also a core reason that exacerbates conflicts and tensions over the control of the resources, making the Sahel hotspot for conflict. External factors such as foreign aid, debt dependency and geopolitical interests from the West and North have also played a significant part in undermining autonomy and sovereignty in the region.

In order to attain autonomy African countries like Niger; should assess the primal role leadership has in national autonomy and also identify key strategies for enhancing both political and economic autonomy. Niger is a primal example of what can happen if there is a transition of power, a lot goes into autonomy but governance is a central organ that determines the trajectory of a lot of things that make development attainable. Another element that is central to development is stability, national stability as well as regional stability because as per Paul, R. (2011) peace and stability is a pre-requisite for development as it provides an enabling environment that fosters fundamentals of progress, like human capital formation, infrastructure development, establishing internal markets and strengthening core competitive sectors. Majority of countries in the Sahelian belt like Niger has had a fair share of instability hence why the region consists of the world's poorest, this is an indication that peace and development go hand in hand. Widespread violence and conflict has economic costs, and for peace to be attained there should be an execution of a multifaceted approach which will focus on governance, mineral resource management, water and food situation and socio-economic factors which exacerbate conflict. Governance however being the primal body can make necessary policies and allocate resources that promotes development and progress.

Niger's new governance came to be because it criticized the prolonged insecurity and conflict in the country that affect economic prospect, even though peace-building is a long-term process, what is important is structural and systematic change, put new policies in place and new organizational structures in place to support the development process. Niger's transition is still new but the changes made with development partners, diplomatic changes with consistency has yielded a degree of positive results. Security and Peace-building is an element that Niger is incorporating in its new governance, with the Wagner Mercenary Group supplanting the security teams on the grounds while also trying to consolidate peace is a priority. This process is multi-stakeholder process but Niger is taking baby steps and there is hope that the country will find stability, then that's when then country can focus on other aspects of development.

For decades Niger was one of the poorest states in Africa, and all efforts for peace-building responses failed because peacebuilding requires resources, commitment of institutions at different levels as well as community support. The resources were not enough to be channelled elsewhere and again, peace-building is not only about the absence of violence, social violence without physical violence can be there, where people rejects the efforts of government and calls out for changes. So in Niger's case; the Military Coup made political changes, that are supported by majority of Nigeriens and few players inland, and in countries where democracy is still a practice the formula is the same. With reference to Kimanuka, O. (2018) Security and Peacebuilding go hand in Hand, and they require multi-stakeholder engagement, and for people to get engaged there should be evidence of either structural or systematic change that will ensure inclusive and sustainable development. Lastly after years of independence and colonial influence, Niger's unfortunate colonial history shows that within the premise of neo-realism, every state has the "self-help" philosophy, and will put its interest before anything else, so African interest is within Africa and nowhere else. In relation of national Agency, it is within Africa's right to determine and re-assess certain bilateral relations to determine whether they still complement their own development prospect and if not there should be a change.

With Africa endowed with extractive mineral and with history of exploratory cooperation from external players, the issue of natural resource governance and ownership should be prioritized in policy communication and executed accordingly. Niger was the seventh largest producer of uranium in 2022

producing 2020 metric tonnes same year, but was still labelled number four in the world's poorest countries because it lacked ownership and governance over its minerals. Majority of its exports did not meet the market price and its was consecutively the same buyers EU countries more especially France.

Niels, K. and Klingebiel, S., (2019) asserts that the development cooperation funding within the premise of SSC, the growth of the number of trust funds, global funds and other ring-fenced resources has contributed to the centralisation of decision-making processes where developing countries are involved in decisions to a lesser extent, more indirectly or only late in the day which has been one of the factors that stifles the national development prospects. For instance, even though Niger and EU countries had effective mineral trade, the pricing, the volumes and other conditionalities were detrimental to the development prospects of Niger because they were highly unreciprocal. So other African countries should understand that for them to benefit, ownership should remain the central principle for development policies to have a lasting impact. This does not only apply to mining but also to other core sectors and this process come at the expense of multiple actors who are willing to work together for common development.

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