



## A Tale of Two Elephants: China's Rise to Global Reckoning, American Hegemony and the Challenges of Sustainable Development in Sub-Saharan Africa

**Akpan, Nse Etim PhD**

Department of Political Science  
 Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria  
 Tel: +2348033379789, Email: nseakpan04@gmail.com

&

**Ogwola, Idoko Robert PhD**

Department of Public Administration  
 Federal University Gashua, Yobe State, Nigeria  
 Tel: +250780536163, ogwola68@gmail.com

### Abstract

The aim of this paper is to make a theoretical exploration into the sudden, yet, explosive rise of China visa-vis America's hegemonic position as the world's unipolar power bloc, and the implications this development portends for sustainable development in Sub-Saharan Africa. This article is essentially a theoretical analysis; therefore, its methodology draws largely on document analysis. The paper argues that China's imminent rise as a global power bloc is a threat to America's global hegemony. It drew inspiration from the theory of offensive realism as propounded by John Joseph Mearsheimer which affirms that China's rise will likely not be peaceful. This development has consequential effects on global peace and stability. But much more importantly, it has implications for Africa's economic and political sustainability. Africa could tap into the opportunity offered by the US-China economic rivalry to formulate proactive strategies that can be applied to afford the continent the needed level of economic development. At the same time Africa must take care not to be isolated by both powers when it becomes apparent that her stance in the power brokerage is divisive and flirtatious. It's kind of tricky for Africa though; but by and large the continent stands to benefit, if the measures she adopts are well crafted. The paper recommends the need for Africa to maximize her opportunity as a resource provider in a bid to ensure her continuous relevance to both China and the US, engage constructively with both countries in the spirit of interdependence among others and concludes that Africa may become the proverbial grass which suffers when two elephants fight if she fails to harness her potential as the beautiful bride of both countries when the power transition begins in earnest.

**Keywords:** America, China, rise, global, hegemony, challenges, sustainable and development

### Introduction

*"When two elephants fight the grass suffers"- an old African proverb*

The rise of China as an important player in the world stage has become a significant phenomenon in recent years. With China's increasing enthusiasm towards regional cooperation in East Asia since the Asian Financial Crisis, the discussion on China's rise and its regional strategy has raised growing concerns within the international community of states and especially among China's neighbors. While some observers view China's activism in regional cooperation





as a bid for regional hegemony, others consider it as promoting economic interdependence and mutual interests (Liu, 2008).

Napoleon is said to have predicted that, when China wakes from its slumber, it would "astonish the world". The Little Corporal was a loquacious fellow who oftentimes got much wrong but he seems to have been right in this instance. In a mere three decades, China has risen from impotence and backwardness to a leading position in global affairs. China is clearly on the way to regaining its historic position as the world's largest economy, hoping to displace the United States. The prospect of transcendent Chinese wealth and power, coupled with America's devaluation of its own political and economic prestige, has led to mounting speculation about China's emergence as a global hegemon to rival and, perhaps in a matter of time, surpass the United States (Freeman, 2016).

Not so long ago, during the Cold War, the world order was defined by the relationship between the Soviet Union and America as the overlords of rival blocs of nations. Recalling this, pundits foresee the reemergence of a bipolar world in which the United States and China exercise joint leadership in a so-called "G-2." With the collapse of the USSR, there had been no rivals to American leadership as Washington has chosen to lead. The United States which spends more on its military than the rest of the world combined has enjoyed absolute military superiority in every region of the globe. But some scholars, analysts and commentators have already routed for China as a "peer competitor" for global dominance (Freeman, 2016).

As a matter of fact, China's rise would definitely become a threat to the United States, Japan and the surrounding countries. The reason for American concern mainly arises from its hegemonic status in the world politics and the ideological incompatibility of China with the Western value system. China's stunning economic growth has convinced the West that it is just a matter of time China would become a world superpower. But its ideological orientation makes China a revolutionary power that is threatening both the United States' status and the global structure. In the main, nationalism may still drive China into a head on collision with the United States, if the latter refuses to accommodate or share the leadership with China as a rising power. Some scholars fear that democracy can unleash strong nationalism and popular nationalism can make China even more aggressive towards the United States (Xia, 2004)

Some observers believe that the American era may be coming to an end, as the Western-oriented world order is replaced by one increasingly dominated by the East. The historian Niall Ferguson has written that the bloody twentieth century witnessed "the descent of the West" and "a reorientation of the world" toward the East. Realists go on to note that as China gets more powerful and the United States' position gradually erodes, two things are likely to happen: China may try to use its growing influence to reshape the rules and institutions of the international system to better serve its interests, and other states in the system especially the declining hegemon (U.S.) will start to see China as a growing security threat. The result of these developments, they predict, will be tension, distrust, and conflict, a typical features of a power transition (Ikenberry, 2008). Recent trade row between Washington and Beijing is a testimony to this claim.

In the light of the above, the drama of China's rise will feature an increasingly powerful China and a declining United States locked in an epic battle over the rules and leadership of the



international system. And as the world's largest country emerges not from within but outside the established post-World War II international order, it is a drama with the likelihood of ending with the grand ascendance of China and the onset of an Asian-centered world order.

For Africa and its numerous challenges of development, China's rise and the expected challenge it will pose to the United States, albeit, becomes a two edged sword. As aptly captured by the erudite pro-democracy activist and human rights crusader, Rev. Jesse Jackson, Africa can only be neglected at America's peril as the African continent will only become more important in the future, and the whole world has a stake in what happens there (Jackson, 2011). The same plight is likely to befall China if it tends to ignore Africa which has been at the background of its growth and gradual but rapid ascension to global reckoning.

Africa's potential in terms of resources, both material and human capital, has the capacity to turn the continent into the beautiful bride for both China and the United States provided she prepares herself properly for the likely marriage of convenience that this rivalry will unfold. On the other hand, it could remain in its abysmal position of raw material supplier and ready market for finished products, if she fails to take advantage of her potentials and demand proper recognition as a cooperative and technical partner for both countries in their expected rivalry.

In fact, few doubt that China is now a great power. China's population and land area are huge, and its geopolitical location means that no part of Asia, northeast, southeast, south, central and northern is without a Chinese presence or interest. However, the rise of China will undoubtedly be one of the great dramas of the twenty-first century. China's extraordinary economic growth and active diplomacy are already transforming East Asia, and future decades will see even greater increases in Chinese power and influence. But exactly how this drama will play out is an open question. Will China overthrow the existing order or become a part of it? And what, if anything, can the United States do to maintain its position as China rises? What will happen to Africa's bid for development in this expected competition between these two nations? Will Africa become the proverbial grass in this contest between two elephants? These and other questions, are what this paper attempts to address using offensive realism as a theoretical framework.

### **Offensive Realism: A Framework of Analysis**

The theory of offensive realism describes the interaction between great powers as dominated by a rational desire to achieve hegemony in a world of insecurity and uncertainty regarding other states' intentions. It is a structural theory belonging to the neorealist school of thought first postulated by John Mearsheimer. The theory holds that the anarchic nature of the international system is responsible for aggressive state behavior in international politics (Peter, 2005). It fundamentally differs from defensive realism, as originally put forward by Kenneth Waltz, depicting great powers as power-maximizing revisionists privileging buck-passing over balancing strategies in their ultimate aim to dominate the international system.

Offensive realism is a prominent theory of international relations belonging to the realist school of thought, which includes various sub-trends characterized by the different perspectives of representative scholars such as Robert Gilpin, Randall Schweller, Eric J. Labs and Fareed Zakaria (*Feng & Ruizhuan, 2006*). *In its simplest form, the theory maintains that the basic structure of the international system forces states concerned about their security to compete with*



*each other for power. The ultimate goal of every great power is to maximize its share of world power and eventually dominate the system. In practical terms, this means that the most powerful states seek to establish hegemony in their region of the world while ensuring that no rival great power dominates another area (Labs, 1997).*

The theory begins with five assumptions about the world, which are all reasonable approximations of reality. First of all, states are the key actors in international politics, and no higher authority stands above them. There is no ultimate arbiter or leviathan in the system that states can turn to if they get into trouble and need help. This is called an anarchic system, as opposed to a hierarchic one. The next two assumptions deal with capabilities and intentions, respectively. All states have offensive military capabilities, although some have more than others, indeed sometimes many more than others. Capabilities are reasonably easy to measure because they are largely composed of material objects that can be seen, assessed, and counted.

Intentions are a different matter. States can never be certain about the intentions of other states, because intentions are inside the heads of leaders and thus virtually impossible to see and difficult to measure. In particular, states can never know with complete confidence whether another state might have its gun sights on them for one reason or another. The problem of discerning states' intentions is especially acute when one ponders their future intentions, since it is almost impossible to know who the leaders of any country will be five or more years from now, much less what they will think about foreign policy.

The theory also assumes that states rank survival as their most important goal. This is not to say it is their only goal, for states invariably have numerous ambitions. However, when push comes to shove, survival trumps all other goals, basically because if a state does not survive, it cannot pursue those other goals. Survival means more than merely maintaining a state's territorial integrity, although that goal is of fundamental importance; it also means preserving the autonomy of a state's policymaking process. Finally, states are assumed to be rational actors, which is to say they are reasonably effective at designing strategies that maximize their chances of survival.

These assumptions, when combined, cause states to behave in particular ways. Specifically, in a world where there is some chance, even just a small one, that other states might have malign intentions as well as formidable offensive military capabilities, states tend to fear each other. That fear is compounded by what is called the "9-11" problem, the fact that there is no night watchman in an anarchic system whom states can call if trouble comes knocking at their door. Accordingly, they recognize they must look out for their own survival, and the best way to do that is to be especially powerful. The logic here is straightforward: the more powerful a state is relative to its competitors, the less likely its survival will be at risk. No country in the Western Hemisphere, for example, would dare attack the United States, because it is so much stronger than any of its neighbors. This reasoning drives great powers to look for opportunities to move the balance of power in their favor, as well as to prevent other states from gaining power at their expense. The ultimate aim is to be the hegemon: that is, the only great power in the system.

However, of particular relevance to this paper is Mearsheimer's reference to the rise of China as a regional hegemon. He asserts that China's rise will not be peaceful and that the U.S. will seek to contain China and prevent it from achieving regional hegemony. He believes that



China will attempt to dominate the Asia-Pacific region just as, he asserts, the U.S. set out to dominate the western hemisphere. The motivation for doing so would be to gain a position of overwhelming security and superiority against its neighbors which it sees as potential challengers to its status. Additionally, he maintains that the U.S. will attempt to form a balancing coalition that consists primarily of India, Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, Vietnam and Indonesia to counter the growing strength and power projection capabilities of China. He points to increased alliances and warming U.S.–Vietnam and U.S.–India relations as evidence of this. Mearsheimer asserts that Australia should be concerned with China's accretion of power because it will lead to an intense security competition between the China and the U.S. that would destabilize the region. He also argues that China is implementing the militarily aggressive philosophy of the U.S. naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan, who argued for sea control and decisive battle (Mearsheimer, 2006).

Mearsheimer has been critical of U.S. policy towards China, which he regards is fated to engage in "intense security competition" and possible war, if it continues on its steep trajectory of economic growth. He recommended that U.S. policy towards China should be containment, which calls for the US to keep China from occupying territory and expanding its influence in Asia. He also recommended that US policy makers should form a balancing coalition with China's neighbors. According to Mearsheimer, India, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Russia, and Vietnam will be allies of the United States against China's attempt to dominate (Mearsheimer, 2005).

### **China-America Hegemony and the Politics of Great Powers**

Before entering into any discussion on China's global status and American hegemony it is necessary to provide an operational definition of 'hegemony'. For the purpose of this task, a state will be granted the status of hegemon when it is the single great power in its region. When a region contains more than one great power, there cannot be a hegemon. An assessment of Beijing's security objectives also raises the question of China as a potential hegemon. A potential hegemon is a state that has the capability to dominate a region by overpowering its great-power neighbors.

Nonetheless, as John Mearsheimer (1990) notes, hegemony is rare because 'the costs of expansion usually outrun the benefits before domination is achieved'. Consequently, potential hegemons only seek to achieve domination when the anticipated costs are low. Therefore, whereas China's economic development and military modernization programs may in the future grant it the status of a potential hegemon, the decision to become the region's hegemon does not directly derive from the capacity to dominate. The costs and risks of achieving domination must be perceived as lower than the benefits derived from hegemon.

With the end of the Cold War in 1989 and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States emerged as the most powerful state on the planet. Many commentators said we are living in a unipolar world for the first time in history, which is another way of saying America is the only great power in the international system. If that statement is true, it makes little sense to talk about great-power politics, since there is just one great power.

But even if one believes, as most scholars do, that China and Russia are great powers, they are still far weaker than the United States and in no position to challenge it in any meaningful



way. Therefore, interactions among the great powers are not going to be nearly as prominent a feature of international politics as they were before 1989, when there were always two or more formidable great powers competing with each other. To highlight this point, contrast the post–Cold World War with the first ninety years of the twentieth century, when the United States was deeply committed to containing potential peer competitors such as Wilhelmine Germany, imperial Japan, Nazi Germany, and the Soviet Union. During that period, the United States fought two world wars and engaged with the Soviet Union in an intense security competition that spanned the globe.

After 1989, however, American policymakers hardly had to worry about fighting against rival great powers, and thus the United States was free to wage wars against minor powers without having to worry much about the actions of the other great powers. Indeed, it has fought six wars since the Cold War ended: Iraq (1991), Bosnia (1995), Kosovo (1999), Afghanistan (2001–present), Iraq again (2003–11), and Libya (2011). It has also been consumed with fighting terrorists across the globe since September 11, 2001. Not surprisingly, there has been little interest in great-power politics since the Soviet threat withered away (Mearsheimer, 2014).

The rise of China appears to be changing this situation, particularly, because this development has the potential to fundamentally alter the architecture of the international system. If the Chinese economy continues growing at a brisk clip in the next few decades, the United States will once again face a potential peer competitor, and great-power politics will return in full force. It is still an open question as to whether China’s economy will continue its spectacular rise or even continue growing at a more modest, but still impressive rate. There are intelligent arguments on both sides of this debate, and it is hard to know who is right. But if those who are bullish on China are correct, it will almost certainly be the most important geopolitical development of the twenty-first century, for China will be transformed into an enormously powerful country. This development will equally raise an interesting question for debate or another paper: would China’s rise be peaceful?

That China is a now great power can only be doubted by a few. The robust Chinese economy, not Japan’s, which remains mired in the economic doldrums, is the engine of Asia’s economic growth. China’s defense establishment, although far from the most modern in the region, is large and undergoing a systemic modernization of its air, naval, and ground forces. Although India and Pakistan weaponized their nuclear programs in 1998, China holds Asia’s only operational combination of strategic, regional and possibly tactical nuclear weapons, and these systems are also in the midst of modernization programs (Mearsheimer, 2005).

Consequently, no regional power can challenge China’s pre-eminence in continental Asia. With the exception of Japan, it is very unlikely that in a decade or two any Asian state will be capable of contesting China’s prominence in maritime East Asia. Only India will be able to challenge a Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal, should Beijing choose to patrol that distance from its home waters. Simply stated, China is now militarily more secure than at any time in the past 150 years. Indeed, one could argue that the ‘one hundred years of humiliation’ that so traumatically scars Chinese memories of its unfortunate modern history is almost ended. With the return of Hong Kong and Macao to Chinese sovereignty, the only major



territories claimed by China outside Beijing's control are Taiwan and the many rocks and islets in the South and East China Seas (Snyder, 2002).

With the restoration of China's status in the world, an expanding economy and no major military threat to its security, one would expect Beijing to be a 'satisfied' power. Satisfied in the sense that its influence in international politics continues to increase and that no state or combination of states present an immediate military threat to China. Yet, even a casual perusal of Chinese commentaries on the trends in global and regional international affairs demonstrates that this is not the case. From Beijing's perspective, the world in which China now exists is far from the world it desires (Godwin, 2006).

The central argument therefore in a nutshell is that if China continues to grow economically, it will attempt to dominate Asia the way the United States dominates the Western Hemisphere. The United States, however, will go to enormous lengths to prevent China from achieving regional hegemony. Most of Beijing's neighbors, including India, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Russia, and Vietnam, will join with the United States to contain Chinese power. The result will be an intense security competition with considerable potential for war. In short, China's rise is unlikely to be tranquil (Mearsheimer, 2014).

It is important to emphasize that our focus is not on how China will behave in the immediate future, but instead on how it will act in the longer term, when it will be far more powerful than it is today. The fact is that present-day China does not possess more significant military power; its military forces are inferior to those of the United States. Beijing would be making a huge mistake to pick a fight with the U.S. military nowadays, but Washington cannot afford to take Beijing for granted either. Contemporary China, in other words, is constrained by the global balance of power, which is clearly stacked in America's favor. Among other advantages, the United States has many consequential allies around the world, while China has less. But we are not concerned with that situation here. Instead, the focus is on a future world in which the balance of power would have shifted sharply against the United States, where China controls much more relative power than it does today, and where China is in roughly the same economic and military league as the United States. In essence, we are talking about a world in which China is much less constrained than it is today.

Equally important in this equation is the effect of the above scenario on the African continent. A serious ally to the U.S. and other western nations, Africa stands the risk of losing relevance in her relations with the U.S. in the face of the emergence of China as a great power. It is noteworthy that there is currently a ravaging Chinese presence in the continent. On the other hand, China is ever willing and always ready to court Africa's friendship on the basis of equal partnership and a win-win strategy. It is also possible that in the face of a stiff competition between the U.S. and China, Africa may become neglected by both particularly if she fails to adopt strategies that will guarantee her continuous relevance to both countries. The next section of this paper therefore focuses on the place of Africa in the seeming future competition for global dominance between China and the U.S.

### **Africa's Development and U.S.-China Competition for Global Dominance**

Africa is a continent perpetually in need of development. **Africa's current economic growth rate is far too low. Its industrial development has been stalled since the late 1970s**



**and the lives of most Africans are marred by poverty, hunger, poor education, ill health, and violence. Every year more Africans live in urban slums while corruption has become the bane of African states. However,** in its pursuit of development, the continent owes much to its traditional western partners, key of which is the United States of America. The U.S. has remained Africa's largest trading partner for centuries and is not relenting in introducing new strategies to remain on top of Africa's trade. Such innovations include the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) introduced on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May 2000 by the administration of Bill Clinton. The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) underpin U.S. trade with sub-Saharan Africa. AGOA has been extended and reauthorized on four occasions, most recently in 2015, and is expected to stay until 2025 (Meltzer, 2015).

AGOA provides exports from sub-Saharan Africa preferential access to the U.S. market. The U.S. also provided preferential access for sub-Saharan Africa exports under its Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), a program that applies to exports from most developing countries. The GSP expired in 2013, but under AGOA GSP preferences remain available for AGOA-eligible countries. AGOA, combined with the GSP, provides duty-free access to the U.S. for 6,400 product lines from 38 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Of total U.S. imports from AGOA countries, around 70 percent enter under AGOA (Meltzer, 2015).

AGOA is also an important tool for achieving broader U.S. goals such as promoting market reforms and building democracy. These goals are achieved through its role in strengthening growth opportunities in sub-Saharan Africa broadly. In fact, in order for a country to be eligible to receive AGOA's trade preferences, compliance with the following conditions is necessary: The country must be making progress towards a market-based economy, enhanced rule of law, elimination of trade barriers and systems to combat corruption, and the protection of worker's rights; the country must not be engaging in activities that undermine U.S. national security; the country must not be engaging in gross violations of human rights. These are values held in high esteem by the U.S. in her dealings with the African continent. It is important to emphasize here that AGOA-eligible countries in sub-Saharan Africa are making significant economic reforms that are improving their capacity to grow and providing new opportunities to deepen their economic relationship with the U.S. (Meltzer, 2015).

For China, after over 15 years of rapidly expanding economic and political exchanges, China-Africa relations are changing. During the sixth Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in Johannesburg in 2015, China's President Xi Jinping announced 10 major Sino-African cooperation projects which covered such areas as industrialization, agricultural modernization, infrastructure, environmental issues, and financial services. With funding for such projects amounting to around US\$60 billion, a number of them are already well underway. The forum reflected the conventional interpretation of Sino-African relations since the early 2000s. China aids Africa's development through the construction and modernization of local infrastructure and financing apparatus. In return, Africa provides China with a steady supply of natural resources (Huy, 2017).

Shifting trends, however, are changing the current status quo. A closer look at Sino-African economic relations reveals that investment and trade flows are perhaps not as one-sided as it is commonly portrayed. Indeed, for African companies and entrepreneurs seeking to expand





overseas, China is progressively becoming a destination of choice. In terms of foreign direct investment (FDI), China's presence in Africa is undeniable. Between 1998 and 2012 alone, approximately 2,000 Chinese firms invested in 49 different African countries (Huy, 2017). In 2014 much of Chinese investments in Africa were concentrated in South Africa, Algeria, Nigeria, and Zambia (as the leading destinations). While this may account for a fraction of the total stock of FDI in Africa when compared to that of the UK, France, and the U.S., the growth of China's FDI in the continent is remarkable and the amount is impressive in relation to its own level of investment in other countries. In fact, according to World Integrated Trade Solution (WITS) database, sub-Saharan Africa in particular garners significant attention from China thanks to its wealth in natural resources. In 2013, China became the top destination for sub-Saharan African exports (over US\$20 billion) and the largest exporter to sub-Saharan Africa (Huy, 2017).

China contributes not only to local infrastructure through buildings and industrial zones, but also to the physical integration of African states through regional projects in the form of roads, railways, waterways, energy infrastructure, and others. This can be seen through the 2015 African Union-China memorandum of understanding to cooperate on major infrastructure and industrialization projects, which represents another step toward the African Union's Agenda 2063 to have world class infrastructure throughout the continent (Huy, 2017).

The above paints a vivid picture of the relationship between the US and Africa as well as that of China and the African continent in an era devoid of conflict of global dominance between both the U.S. and China. However, scholars and analysts alike are skeptical that all these may change in the wake of the imminent struggle for global relevance and dominance between the US and China particularly if African countries fail to exert their presence in global affairs. Although there are contestations by Africans on the choice of development partner between China and the US, most Africans prefer China, citing the Chinese development model to that of the U.S. and former European colonial powers as reasons. In spite of this, it is argued that when the politics of great power begins in earnest Africa may likely suffer neglect from both the U.S. and China either as a result of their concentration in the battle for dominance or arising from Africa's disposition towards either power.

Similarly, while the Sino-African trade relationship was primarily defined in the recent past as infrastructure and development in exchange for natural resources, the trends are changing. The shift in demographics should dampen China's demand for natural resources, while rising wages in China should encourage the shift of manufacturing capabilities to Africa. Eventually, African labor in China-funded infrastructure projects in Africa could become more attractive than exporting Chinese labor.

The above is actually based on the projection that China's population will decline over time whereas Africa's is expected to be on the rise. According to Huy (2017), China and Africa's demographics are moving in opposite directions: China's population is rapidly aging, while Africa's fertility rates are high, with half of the continent's population below the age of 20. UN data forecasts a decrease in the working age population in China from 927 million in 2015 to 838 million by 2035, whereas Africa's working population could increase from 536 million to 922 million over the same period.



Additionally, China will need to create fewer and fewer jobs while Africa will be required to create 20 to 30 million jobs every year in the years to come. A smaller population and labor force in the future, in addition to a slowing construction boom, may mean lower demand in China for natural resources. However, a second change to note is the progression of wages in China, especially since 2012. An increase in wages could in fact result in an increase in consumption per capita due to lifestyle changes, and a greater need for resources. Nevertheless, while its appetite for energy and resources in the 2000s largely explained China's risk-taking approach in its African investments, China will most likely be more selective with its projects in the future (Albert, 2017). This definitely portends grave danger for Africa-China relations.

For America, its conditions for dealing with Africa are well spelt out and she is quite unwilling to compromise these set standards. Democratic governance in Africa is top on the agenda of the U.S. for African governments to enjoy the benefits of foreign direct investment (FDI), aids and other assistance, conditions deemed as stringent by most African leaders who have sworn not to uphold the sanctity of democracy but holds authoritarianism as their guiding principle. The U.S. is equally fast to accuse China of courting despotic and corrupt regimes in Africa, cutting corners in the pursuit of contracts and flooding the African markets with inferior and outdated goods and services among other vices. It becomes predictable therefore that the US will do all within her powers to make the continent learn her lessons in a hard way for ever identifying with China when the competition for dominance between both becomes intense.

Furthermore, the rise of China has been met with mixed reactions. For optimists, the rise of China makes a world that has seen a long peace even less likely to see conflict. Others take a more cautious approach and argue that what the future holds cannot be predicted. China's rise may give rise to conflict or it may not. For pessimists, the rise of China is likely to or will inevitably cause instability and conflict. Just as Thucydides deemed the Peloponnesian War inevitable as Athens rose and the relative power of Sparta declined, so history may repeat itself as China rises and the relative power of the United States declines (Steinsson, 2014).

Finally, if conflict erupts as China rises, Africa as a continent faces a greater risk within the matrix of the US-China confrontation. With lesser capability to defend itself, the continent may become the epicenter of attrition and recipient of the ugly face of conflict. But if the reverse occurs, the continent may be better for it, provided it adopts the best of strategies to remain relevant to both the U.S. and China in her pursuit of development.

### **Conclusion**

This paper undertook an analysis of the likely place of Africa as a continent in the event of a possible emergence of China as a world super power in place of the U.S. It discovered that there is every tendency that China's rise to global dominance will be resisted by the U.S. (and this is already happening now under the Presidency of Donald Trump) given its present status as a peer competitor to the global hegemony. It further observes that Africa stands the risk of neglect by both powers once the race for global dominance got intense as the anticipated conflict would not augur well for the continent currently embroiled in the search for development partners. It may on the other hand enjoy a robust and beneficial relationship with China if she can utilize the advantage of her resource endowment to the fullest. The paper drew inspiration





from the theory of offensive realism as propounded by John Joseph Mearsheimer which affirms that China's rise will likely not be peaceful.

The paper uncovers that there is no unanimity of opinion among scholars on the consequences of China's rise on Africa particularly because of their diverse theoretical orientation. It concluded that Africa may become the proverbial grass which suffers when two elephants fight if she fails to harness her potential as the beautiful bride of both countries when the power transition begins in earnest.

### Recommendations

From the above conclusion, the paper recommends the following options for the continent:

- i. That since relations between nations in the international system is based on national interest, Africa should maximize the opportunity opened to her as a resource provider by making a better bargain to ensure her continuous relevance to both the US and China. It is against this backdrop that the continent will gain relevance even in the midst of the anticipated crisis between both countries and maximize her interest to the fullest.
- ii. There is need for Africa to define clearly her objectives while relating with either China or the U.S. In doing this, the continent must take into cognizance the different strategies adopted by both countries. What this means is that Africa must redefine her foreign policy objectives in a way that fits into the win-win strategy of her relations with China or comply with the requirements of the U.S. in order to reap the full benefits of their bilateral relations.
- iii. Africa must as a matter of constructive engagement desire her respect before the US and China in the spirit of interdependence knowing too well that she has enormous potentials that can add value to her relations with both countries. This require that she operates as a partner in progress and not from a position of subservience hitherto associated with Africa's relations with the advanced and industrialized countries of the world.
- iv. But there is also a "critical need" for more transparency and predictability in donor-recipient relations, based on "clearly understood rules of the game. Effective partnership requires confidence and trust, as well as predictability and transparency "on the part of all those involved". There must be an end to lip-service about partnerships and about African countries "owning" their development process.

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### Brief Notes on Authors

**Nse Etim Akpan** an Associate Professor of international relations and strategic studies lectures in the Department of Political Science, Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria. His research interests include foreign policy, interstate relations and strategic studies.

**Idoko Robert Ogwola** is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Public Administration, Federal University Gashua, Yobe State. He has interests in public administration and governance, public policy, development studies and global peace and security.

