

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

LEGON CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND

DIPLOMACY

THE US-CHINA COMPETITION AND ITS ECONOMIC AND

POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS ON AFRICA

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Bruno Berewono, do declare that this dissertation is my own work towards the award of the degree of Master of Arts in International Affairs at the University of Ghana, Legon, under the supervision of Dr Innocent Badasu. I further declare that, having read and understood the research ethics and guidelines of the University of Ghana, this dissertation is my own effort, conducted under the necessary conditions of the Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy (LECIAD), and that no part of this work has been presented to any university or institution for the award of any degree.



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DEDICATION

To Allen Esong Berewono, a bright dawn from on High who arrived during the study and has been a delight ever after. Faustina Tantie, this is the outcome of the rain that beat us to LECIAD that late afternoon of September 2023. This is for you and Allen.



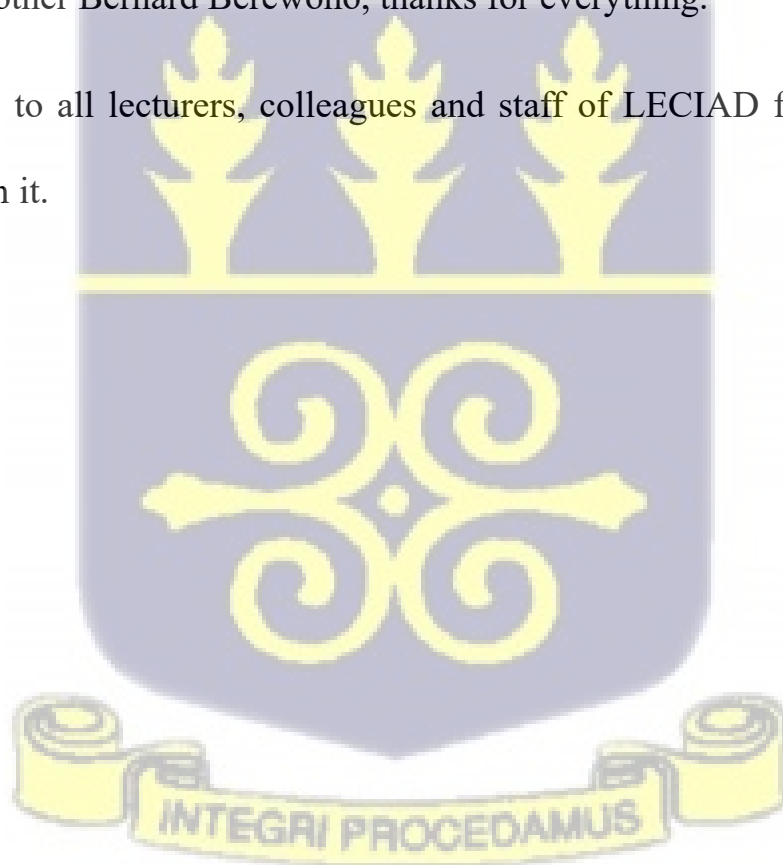
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I thank the almighty God for His strength, grace, mercies and providence for which this work is completed. I am also grateful to my family for their support throughout this study.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACCPA	Africa-China Centre for Policy and Advisory
AfCFTA	Africa Continental Free Trade Area
AfDB	African Development Bank
AGOA	African Growth and Opportunities Act
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CFR	Council on Foreign Relations
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment

FOCAC	Forum on China Africa Conference
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMD	Guomindang
HST	Hegemony Stability Theory
ICT	Information Communication Technology and industry
IMEC	India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KMT	Kuomintang
LECIAD	Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer plus
MFARI	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDB	New Development Bank
OBOR	One Belt One Road
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PPP	purchasing power parity
PRC	People's Republic of China
SOEs	State-Owned Enterprises
UN	United Nations
UNC	United Nations Command

UNCTAD United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

US United States

USA United States of America

USSR Union of Soviet Socialists Republic

WB World Bank

WTO World Trade Organization

ZTE Zhongxing Telecommunications Equipment



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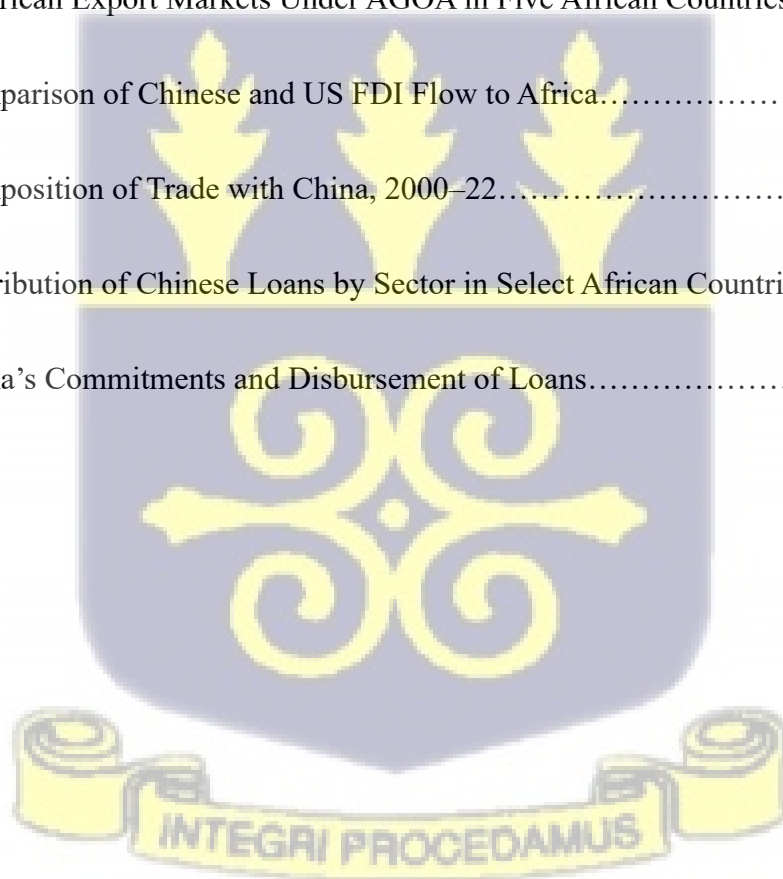


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ABSTRACT

This study examines the economic and political implications of the US-China competition on Africa, focusing on its economic and political impact, challenges, opportunities, and the continent's potential strategies for navigating this global power struggle. Guided by the hegemonic stability theory, the research employs qualitative methods, including interviews with policymakers, scholars, and diplomats, as well as an analysis of secondary data.

Findings reveal that Africa occupies a strategic position in the US-China rivalry, with significant implications for its trade, governance, and development trajectories. Economically, China has emerged as Africa's largest trading partner, facilitating infrastructure development and industrial growth. However, this has resulted in trade imbalances and rising debt levels. Politically, the competition has revived Cold War-style bloc politics, with African leaders largely advocating neutrality to maintain flexibility and avoid alienation. The rivalry presents opportunities for Africa, including increased investments, trade partnerships, and strategic leverage; however, it also poses challenges such as coercive diplomacy, resource dependency, and risks to sovereignty.

To mitigate the adverse effects, the study recommends strengthening regional integration through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), diversifying partnerships, promoting governance reforms, and fostering economic resilience by reducing raw material dependency. The research underscores Africa's agency in shaping its developmental trajectory

amidst the intensifying US-China competition, advocating for pragmatic strategies to harness opportunities while safeguarding its autonomy.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The international system established by the West following the end of the Second World War, under the leadership of the United States, is undergoing a significant transformation. Initially characterized by a bipolar structure dominated by the United States and its Western allies on one side and the Soviet Union on the other, the post-Cold War era saw the emergence of a unipolar system with the United States as the uncontested global leader with dominance in both material and ideational terms (Tizzard, 2017). This period facilitated the proliferation of democracy and capitalism – key pillars of the Western liberal order – through institutions and norms aimed at global governance.

However, this unipolar era has ended (Peters, 2023). The rise of China, a development enabled in large part by American economic engagement, has eroded U.S. dominance in the international system. Fareed Zakaria refers to this shift as the "rise of the rest," signifying a multipolar world characterized by the emergence of regional powers such as India, Turkey, and Brazil, alongside dominant players like China, Russia and the United States (Zarakol, 2019). Although the system now appears to have multiple centers of power, it is primarily defined by the competition between these two major poles – the United States of America and China.

The earlier cooperative relationship between the U.S. and China, which contributed to global economic growth, poverty reduction, and provided affordable goods to consumers worldwide (Glenn, 2017) has given way to distrust and rivalry across economic, technological, financial, and political domains. The US-China economic relationship is now marked by trade wars, tariffs, and efforts to decouple supply chains from China to friendly allied nations such as India,

Vietnam, and Mexico – manifesting in strategies like "friend-shoring" – buttressing the extent of this divergence (Meltzer and Shenai, 2019). Both superpowers have also sought to build alternative structures to assert their influence. While Western institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank continue to play a significant global role, China has introduced mechanisms such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), reflecting its bid to reshape global norms.

Scholars differ in their description of the competition between the US and China, and the seemingly fragmentation of the international system. For instance, Brands and Gaddis (2021) and Schindler, DiCarlo, et al. (2022) label the competition as Cold War 2.0 and the "Second Cold War" respectively. However, other scholars such as Joseph Nye and (Kausikan, 2016), challenge this characterization, emphasizing that there is presently a deeper integrated economic and technological ties between the U.S. and China. Regardless of terminology, this competition spans geostrategic, economic, and ideological domains, with significant implications for global governance and power alignments.

Africa has emerged as a pivotal arena in this rivalry. The continent's 54 sovereign states offer strategic political, economic, and security opportunities for the U.S. and China. Politically, African nations represent a critical bloc in the United Nations, and China has sought their support for policies such as the "One China" principle, achieving near-universal backing on the continent (Didier, 2018). Out of the fifty-four independent African countries, only Eswatini has diplomatic relations with Taiwan (Wang, 2020). Economically, Africa's vast natural resource, youthful population, and market potential make it an attractive partner for both powers. Security concerns, particularly those related to instability in the Sahel, terrorism, and piracy especially in the Horn of Africa, further make the continent indispensable to both the US and China as they compete for global primacy.

Despite the intensifying competition, the implications for Africa's political and economic landscape remain underexplored. The lack of clear strategies to navigate this dynamic global system poses challenges for African nations seeking to leverage the rivalry to their advantage. This study seeks to examine the impact of the U.S.-China competition on Africa, focusing on strategies the continent can adopt to maximize its benefits and mitigate associated risks.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The competition between the United States of America (USA) and China represents a defining feature of contemporary international relations. This multifaceted rivalry spans trade, politics, security, technology, and the future of the global order, manifesting not only on regional stages such as the Asia-Pacific and Africa but also on a global scale with widespread ramifications (Heath & Thompson, 2018).

Scholars argue that such competition is historically inevitable when a rising power challenges an established hegemon. (Allison, 2020), (Heath & Thompson, 2018), and (Xuetong, 2011) and others highlight that rising powers, like China, seek greater authority in the international system, often leading to confrontation with the dominant power – in this case, the USA. Allison's characterised this as the "Thucydides Trap" to underscore this inevitability, noting that 12 of 16 historical instances of such rivalries over the past 500 years have resulted in war (Allison, 2018).

The drivers of the US-China competition are complex and multifaceted. While some scholars emphasize strategic technology and control of the global technological landscape as the core issue (Schneider-Petsinger, Wang et al. 2019), others identify broader structural drivers. (Heath & Thompson, 2018), argue that the competition is rooted in China's challenge to American dominance and its growing economic, military, and demographic power. (Allison, 2018) categorizes these drivers as material realities, psychological factors (fear and arrogance), and

political factors such as national security priorities. Chinese scholars, as discussed by (Zhao, 2019) also argue that the narrowing power gaps, mutual perceptions shaped by domestic politics, differences in values, and conflicting policy agendas are among the factors driving the competition between the US and China.

This rivalry has tangible manifestations, including an ongoing trade war, technological decoupling, and efforts by the USA to "friend-shore" supply chains away from China (Liu & Woo, 2018). Additionally, East Asia remains a focal point of this competition (Kausikan 2016), yet Africa has emerged as a critical arena due to its vast natural resources, growing youthful population, and strategic significance as a voting bloc within the United Nations.

Existing studies on the US-China competition in Africa have primarily explored topics such as the strategic ambiguity of the US-China competition on their core interests in Africa (Lohalo, Lestari et al. 2022), areas of cooperation and competition between the superpowers (Wang 2020), and the impact of the rivalry on Africa's economic development (Jacobs & Boldt, 2019). These studies underscore the increasing strategic significance of Africa in the US-China competition but reveal a gap in understanding the broader economic and political implications of this rivalry for African nations.

To address this gap, this study seeks to answer the question: *What are the economic and political implications of the US-China competition for Africa, and what measures can policymakers adopt to mitigate potential negative impacts?* This research will contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing a nuanced analysis of the implications of great-power competition for African states and offering actionable policy recommendations.

1.3 Research Objectives

The primary objective of the research is to explore the implications of the US-China competition on Africa's economic and political landscape. This will be achieved through the following specific objectives:

- i. To explore the possible economic implications of the US-China competition on Africa.
- ii. To investigate the political implications of the US-China competition on Africa.
- iii. To understand the possible opportunities and challenges this competition poses to the continent.
- iv. To explore the possible intervention measures the continent can adopt to protect itself from the impact of this competition.

1.4 Research Questions

The study aims to explore the implications of the US-China competition on Africa's economic and political landscape. To achieve this outcome, the study aims to answer the following research questions:

- i. How has the US-China competition impacted Africa's economy?
- ii. What are the political implications of the US-China competition in Africa?
- iii. What challenges and opportunities are there for Africa from this competition?
- iv. What intervention measures can the continent adopt to protect itself from the negative impact of this competition?

1.5 Methodology

This segment of the work discusses the methodology employed for the study which seeks to understand the US-China competition and its economic and political implications on Africa. The study adopts the qualitative approach. The rest of the segment discusses the research

design, sampling strategies, data collection techniques, and the methods used for data analysis. The ethical considerations and the limitations of the study are also discussed.

1.5.1 Research Approach: Qualitative Methodology

Essentially, three research approaches are mainly used in the Social Sciences: quantitative, qualitative, and the mixed research approach. This study employs the qualitative approach. (Creswell, Hanson et al. 2007) defined qualitative research as an approach to exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, Hanson et al. 2007). This approach is necessitated by the fact that the US-China competition is complex and multifaceted and thus a deeper understanding of its economic and political implications of this context in Africa is required. This approach will thus allow the researcher to appreciate and understand this phenomenon from the viewpoint of different stakeholders.

The following informed the researcher's choice of the qualitative approach for this study:

- **Exploratory Nature:** The topic of the study is exploratory in nature. It seeks to explore an evolving phenomenon which is presently under-researched, that is, the implications of the US-China competition on Africa's economic and political landscape.
- **Flexibility:** Since the US-China competition is multidimensional and impacts different regions of the world in many ways, a qualitative approach provides the flexibility to analyze the varied impacts of this competition in different African countries.
- **Complexity of Relations:** Africa's relations with these superpowers – the US and China is complex and is shaped by historical, political, economic, and among other dimensions, and are best examined through in-depth, qualitative methods.

Flowing from the reasons stated above, the qualitative research method is particularly suited for this study because it amongst others allows the researcher to adequately study the various dimensions of this evolving competition that cannot be quantified in only quantitative terms. The approach again allows the researcher to delve into policy documents, the views of policymakers, civil society activists and the views of political actors in select African countries to adequately understand the varied impacts of the competition and various remedial intervention means countries are adopting to cope with the exigencies of a fluid international system.

1.5.2 Research Design

This study utilizes a case study design. A case study is defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.” (Yin, 2009). The approach enables the researcher to gain insight into a contemporary phenomenon in context. This design is necessary because of time and resource constraints. Thus, the case study design allows the researcher to examine the economic and political implications of the US-China competition within specific African contexts. The case study design will enable the researcher to investigate and understand how different African countries are affected and how they respond to this competition. A few African countries representing the various regions of the continent and with wide exposure to both the US and China among other characteristics will be selected for the study.

The design is particularly suited for this study because it allows for the selection and examination of the varied economic and political implications of this evolving competition on some strategic countries representing West Africa, East Africa, and Southern Africa. These countries are also strategic by their economic structure that gives them exposure to the two superpowers. For instance, some countries such as Nigeria, South Africa and Ghana abound in

various natural resources such as oil and gold, while others such as Kenya and Ethiopia are considered countries with diversified economies. The case study design thus allows for flexibility and nuanced selection and study of the economic and political implications of the contest on these countries as broader representation of Africa.

1.5.3 Case Selection and Sampling Technique

The researcher used purposive sampling to select five African countries – Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Ethiopia, and South Africa – for the study. Purposive sampling according to (Robinson, 2014) is the “intentional selection of informants based on their ability to elucidate a specific theme, concept, or phenomenon.” These countries were selected for this study based on their geopolitical, varied economic, and political models, and to maintain regional balance and perspectives among other considerations: these countries are also located in West Africa, East Africa, and Southern Africa.

1.5.4 Data Collection Methods

This researcher relied on both primary and secondary data sources. Data collection involved the following methods:

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including:

- **Policymakers** from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of some select African countries.
- **Scholars and experts** in international relations, African studies, and political economy.
- **Economic and political analysts** who specialize in African affairs and global power competition.
- **Representatives from Civil Society Organizations** such as the Africa-China Centre for Policy and Advisory among others who have insight into Africa's positioning in

global politics. The respondents interviewed include: A Director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of Ghana, a professor and Head of Department of Political Science at the University of Ghana, and the Director of the China-Africa Centre for Policy Advisory. Attempts were made to interview respondents from some embassies from the selected countries, but the researcher was unsuccessful in that regard. However, the researcher reviewed trade and other relevant data from the select countries and read extensively on secondary literature relative to the topic of study.

The interviews were semi-structured to allow for flexibility, enabling respondents to elaborate on their experiences and views on the US-China competition and its implications on Africa's economic and political landscape, while allowing the researcher to guide the conversation towards the study's key themes.

1.5.5 Document Analysis

Secondary data was also collected through extensive document analysis. This method involves the systematic review of relevant documents such as:

- Government policies and official statements from the US, China, and African governments.
- Agreements, treaties, and trade deals involving the US, China, and African nations.
- Economic reports and trade data from international organizations and think tanks, such as the IMF, World Bank, or the Brookings Institution among others.
- Media reports and articles on the US-China competition in Africa.

The document analysis provided historical and policy context for the study and allow for triangulation of data obtained from interviews.

1.5.6 Data Analysis

The data for the study is analysed using thematic analysis, which is appropriate for qualitative research as it enables the identification and analysis of patterns or themes within the data. The following steps will be employed:

- **Transcription:** Interview recordings will be transcribed verbatim for analysis. Records of individual interviews will be carefully transcribed and documented in Microsoft Word. Transcripts will be carefully read together with secondary literature especially academic articles and reports.
- **Coding:** The researcher will employ the use of Microsoft Excel for code tracking. Interview transcripts will be meticulously coded manually, with all codes and corresponding quotations documented and organized within a dedicated Excel spreadsheet. Codes will be grouped based on the following: understanding and perception of the emerging global competition, perceived implications of the competition, African agency, and among others.
- **Theme Development:** The researcher grouped the various codes identified into potential themes based on common concepts, implications, or patterns. For example, themes will be centered around the implications of the US-China competition on the economic and political implications, alignment strategies and choices, and emerging threats and opportunities for African countries in the present multipolar international system. The main themes which informs the study are further listed below :
 - The political and economic impacts of US-China competition.
 - The opportunities and challenges the competition presents to Africa.
 - African strategies in balancing relations with both powers.

- Differences in the effects across case study countries.

These themes will be explicitly defined and analyzed in relation to the original research questions and objectives of the study.

- **Comparative Analysis:** A comparative analysis will be conducted across the selected case study countries to highlight commonalities and differences in their responses and outcomes.
- **Synthesis of Primary and Secondary Data:** The themes derived from the interviews will be examined using the secondary literature (academic articles, policy reports). This process serves to either ground the findings in existing scholarly works or highlight where the data presented novel insights.

1.5.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are critical in this research and more so, for a study that involves sensitive political and economic matters. The following ethical considerations will be addressed:

- **Permission:** The researcher first obtained permission from the Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy (LECIAD) and obtained permission from selected individuals and institutions before obtaining any information.
- **Informed Consent:** Participants will be informed about the study's purpose, and their consent obtained before any interviews or focus groups.
- **Confidentiality:** The identities of participants will be anonymized to protect their privacy and ensure their safety, particularly when discussing politically sensitive issues.
- **Non-Coercion:** Participation will be entirely voluntary, with no coercion or incentives influencing individuals' decisions to participate.

- **Intellectual property:** The researcher also duly credited all works cited for this study and acknowledged all inputs made by all who contributed.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** The researcher will ensure respect for cultural norms and practices during interviews and focus groups, particularly in diverse African contexts.

1.5.8 Limitations of the Study

This study is subject to certain limitations, including:

- **Generalizability:** Due to the focus on a limited number of case study countries, the findings may not be entirely generalizable to all African nations.
- **Access to Key Informants:** Gaining access to high-level policymakers and experts was a major challenge. Emails and messages sent were not responded to in some cases. Others also responded but at a much later time which delayed the study.
- **Political Sensitivity:** Discussing geopolitical competition can be sensitive, and some respondents were unwilling to share candid views, leading to potential biases.

1.5.9 Conclusion

This segment of the work has outlined the methodology for the study, justifying the use of a qualitative approach and explaining the research design, case selection, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques. Ethical considerations and the limitations of the study were also discussed. Subsequent chapters will discuss the historical context of the US-China relations and chapter three will then present the findings from the data collected through these methods, highlighting the political and economic implications of the US-China competition on the selected African countries.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

This section seeks to elucidate further the theoretical framework underpinning this study. The theory that underpins this study is the Hegemony Stability Theory (HST). This theory provides a useful framework to analyze the US-China competition and its implications on Africa. The theory essentially “claims that the presence of a single, strongly dominant actor in international politics leads to collectively desirable outcomes for all states in the international system. Conversely, the absence of a hegemon is associated with disorder in the world system and undesirable outcomes for individual states” (Snidal, 1985).

The post-World War II international order has been shaped and led by the United States of America as the hegemon. The US and its allies constructed the economic, institutional, financial, and security architecture around which the global system revolves. However, China’s rise, especially from the early 2000s till now, challenges American hegemonic dominance, leading to the present competition. This competition will have far-reaching implications for every region of the world, though the impacts may vary from region to region. This study seeks to understand the economic and political implications of the competition in Africa from the viewpoint of this theory.

1.6.1 Origins and Definitions

The word hegemony became prominent in International Relations following the publication of Antonio Gramsci’s Prison Notebook and has subsequently taken various meanings and dimensions in the Social Sciences (Dirzauskaite & Ilinca, 2017). The concept originates from the Greek word ‘Hegemonia’ which connotes establishing control or exercising command or leadership (Antoniades, 2018). (Keohane, 2005) defines hegemony as “leadership, based on domination”. He argued that material capability defines a hegemon, and the hegemon can impose world order and stability by establishing institutions that facilitate global peace, and

stability, or with the use of force. Other scholars such as (Min, 2003), (Joseph, 2008), (Snidal, 1985), and Webb and Krasner (1989) among others all agree on the position that hegemony has to do with leadership, control, or exercising domination.

For this study, hegemony is defined as the domination, control, and exertion of leadership by a singular power – the hegemon – within the international system that makes rules and enforces compliance with the accepted rules to maintain order, stability, and peace within the international system. Hegemons enforce compliance to rules either through coercion or benevolence towards unit states within the international system.

A key requirement of a hegemon is the provision of public good. This refers to benefits provided by the hegemon that are accessible to all states, such as security and economic stability. Another feature of a hegemon is that it maintains international stability and order through either benevolence or coercion. The absence of a hegemon, it is often argued, leads to chaos in the international system since various centres of power use different means to pursue their interests which can sometimes lead to conflict.

A hegemon emerges from other unit states due to its unrivalled asymmetric power advantages over other states. It is distinguished by its population, military strength and the size of its economy, technological advancement, natural resource endowment, educational advantages, and culture among others (Keohane, 2005).

It is worthy of note that these advantages, long associated with America, are now clearly also found in China. China's economy has overtaken America in terms of Purchasing Parity Index. It is the largest trade partner of more than two-thirds of the world, and the largest manufacturer in the world, with a population of over 1.4 billion people and advanced technology and manufacturing. China is the largest single bilateral lender to Africa and much of the Global South (Nicolas, 2024). It is the largest investor in infrastructure, aid, and loans to countries in

the Global South. These features thus conclude definitively that the world is witnessing the rise of a hegemon, of comparable scale and weight as the dominant hegemon, America.

1.6.2 US Hegemony and Africa

The US international-led architecture has greatly benefited Africa. (Snidal, 1985) raised two central arguments of HST: “First, the presence of a dominant actor will lead to the provision of a stable international regime of free trade (more broadly, hegemons provide leadership for the emergence of international regimes in various issue-areas). Second, although the dominant leader benefits from this situation (i.e., it turns a net "profit" from providing the good), smaller states gain even more. They bear none of the costs of provision and yet share fully in the benefits. In Olson's terms the "small exploit the large," and the traditional view of hegemony in the international system is turned on its head.” Africa, a continent endowed with huge natural resources but ravaged by the scourge of slave trade, colonialism, poverty, and failed leadership for many years significantly benefited from the US-led international system.

From the HST perspective, it can be inferred that Africa, a continent of fifty-four independent states has significantly benefitted from American hegemony, without much cost. Africa’s integration into the global economic, institutional, and security structure of the world is largely a function of American hegemonic dominance. The US stance against colonialism especially after World War II aided in the granting of independence by European countries to Africa. US initiatives such as the African Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA), development aid, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and budgetary support among others have greatly aided Africa (Williams, 2015). Moreover, much of America’s aid to Africa is tied to African support for democracy promotion, respect for human rights, free market capitalism, good governance, and adherence to the rules-based international order. These among others have aided in the rapid expansion of democratic governments in Africa, free expression, and the thriving of independent media and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

The theory thus holds that as long as the US remains dominant within the global system, African countries can expect to continue deriving the benefits and stability, order, and security within the international system without much cost. This also means that any attempt to disrupt and take over US hegemonic status may cause uncertainty, fear, and concerns within Africa.

1.6.3 China's Challenge to US Hegemony in Africa

China's ascendance within the international system has greatly aided global economic growth. However, as its economy expanded with increased global power, alarm bells began to ring in Western capitals about China's challenge to American dominance within the global system. This became pronounced in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis which greatly damaged trust in the US and its free-market capitalism (Wang, 2020). It reinforced China's confidence in its political and economic systems, thus one-party state led economic growth.

Over the years, China has invested heavily and expanded its economic reach to every corner of the globe. In Africa, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its heavy lending towards infrastructural projects have significantly contributed to addressing the massive infrastructural deficit plaguing Africa. China is the largest bilateral lender to Africa, the main export destination for many African countries, and the largest external investor in Africa's extractive sector (Nyabiage, 2020). China-Africa trade grew from \$ \$10.6 billion in the year 2000 to more than \$ 257 billion in 2023 eclipsing the paltry \$ 14.2 billion in US-Africa trade.

Another issue worthy of note is China's establishment of parallel global financial systems that rival the established hegemonic global financial institutions of the IMF and World Bank. China together with partners established the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the New Development Bank to provide financial support to countries, especially in the Global South. China also established the Belt and Road Initiative to advance infrastructure connectivity from Asia, Europe, parts of the Middle East, and Africa (Xu & Liu, 2022). Though

these initiatives are touted as complementing the existing hegemonic institutions of the IMF and World Bank, many people in the West consider them as China's declaration of intent to challenge and disrupt the established global system (Aiyar, Chen et al. 2023).

A noticeable fact about Sino-African relations is that China operates a hands-free relationship with Africa. China's official policy in its economic, political, and security relations with African countries is that of non-interference in their domestic affairs. This policy is favoured by many African leaders who continually decry US stringent conditionalities on good governance, democracy, human rights, and free market capitalism among other conditionalities.

From the discussion outlined, and from the HST perspective, China's rise introduces competition that challenges the existing global economic order. The theory argues that this competition between the established hegemon – the USA, and the rising hegemon – China, would create uncertainty, as many African countries may face difficulties balancing their relationships with both powers. The difficulty in managing relations with these hegemons may be compounded with unknown ramifications for African countries.

The justification of the suitability of this theoretical framework is premised on the fact that China's rise in the international system is seen as a challenge to the dominance of the United States – the dominant hegemon – which has provided public goods of international stability, peace, market liberalization, and the promotion of democracy, amongst others. These public goods have significantly contributed to the advancement of many African countries following the end of the Cold War, with many countries lifting millions of their citizens out of extreme poverty. China's rise, however, presents an opportunity to African countries to access alternative funding sources with fewer conditionalities, infrastructure funding, and less interference in their internal affairs. This poses a challenge to the dominance of the US. How

then will African countries exercise agency in the midst of the competition, and what options are available to these countries as the competition evolves and poses various challenges to the international system?

Also, since HST predicts that a decline in power of the dominant hegemon in the global system, or a prolonged period of hegemonic rivalry, leads to instability and a decline in global public goods, the theory provides an appropriate framework for examining the economic and political consequences for African nations amidst this competition and how individual countries navigate the competition confronting the challenges inherent in the competition and taking advantage of emerging opportunities.

Finally, HST argues that smaller states, in this case, much of Africa, benefit most from aligning with the dominant hegemon due to the provision of stability. This research uses the theory to seek to understand the variations in alignment and policy choices among the five case study countries as they navigate an increasingly complex international system.

1.6.4 Criticisms of HST

The HST is however criticized, and its relevance is questioned because of changes in the dynamics of power within the global system. The world, it is argued has transitioned from a unipolar era with America as the undisputed hegemon to a multipolar world with different centres of power in the US, China, and Russia. This has created a fluid and complex international system with countries relating to these powers on their terms and based on their interest at any given time (Snidal, 1985). Hence, the US-China competition would not have any significant impact on Africa since the African agency would make decisions that would benefit their countries.

Also, another criticism of HST especially regarding the topic is that it discounts the role of agency and the Africans' ability to shape their destiny. It is becoming obvious that African

leaders will assert their independence and pursue their own choices and interests in their relations with these superpowers. The fear that African countries might be forced to align with either the US or China is thus misplaced since each country will relate with either power in pursuit of their interest.

Finally, it is worth noting that both China and the US have significant economic and security interests in Africa. This will necessitate both countries to build relationships with African leaders. This, above all, imply that cooperation and competition can coexist, making HST's emphasis on dominance less relevant.

1.7 Literature Review

The competition between the United States and China has emerged as the defining geopolitical feature of the 21st century. As both powers vie for influence, their rivalry is increasingly shaping the political, economic, and strategic landscapes of other regions, including Africa. Africa, with its abundant natural resources, emerging markets, and strategic geopolitical position, has become a key theater of this global competition. This literature review explores the scholarly discourse on the US-China competition and its implications for Africa's economic and political landscape. It is based on themes such as the impact on Africa's economy, political implications, opportunities, challenges, and potential intervention strategies for the continent.

1.7.1 The Emergence of the US-China Competition

Different scholars proffer different dates as to the origins of the US-China competition. Some date it to 2008 following the financial crisis in the US that shook the foundation of globalism capitalism (Wang, 2020). China used the global financial crisis as an avenue to accelerate its catchup with the US (Dollar, 2018). (Zhao, 2019) argued that the 2008 financial crisis “altered the state of asymmetry in US–China relations, gradually compelling the United States to treat China as a co-equal”. This event solidified Chinese belief in the supremacy of their economic

and political systems and hence upon recovery from the crisis, the US relations with China began to look shaky. China also began questioning the continued dominance of the US within the global system, especially in Asia. To these scholars, this marked the beginning of the US-China competition.

A second group of scholars also date the beginning of the US-China competition to President Obama's pivot to Asia, which increased tension with China. Announced by the Obama administration in 2011, the policy sought to shore up US influence in the Asia Pacific region and counterbalance China's perceived growing influence (Southgate, 2017). The policy thus sought to foster stronger economic, military and diplomatic relations with US allies and to lure other countries in the region towards the US democratic system and away from China (Singh, 2023). China however took a different view of this pivot arguing that the Pivot to Asia is a US strategy to encircle China with hostile US alliances to choke off its advancement. China views the pivot as a containment strategy to choke off its rise, just like the US did to the Soviet Union (Wang, 2020).

The last group of people date the competition to President Trump's launch of the trade war with China (Hass, 2020). According to this group of scholars, Trump campaigned for the 2016 elections on the platform of making America Great Again and outlining myriad grievances of how China keeps taking advantage of the US to become a global superpower while the US keeps declining. Upon assumption of office, he set about to right this perceived wrong by imposing trade tariffs on billions of Chinese goods. China reciprocated and this marked the onset of the US-China competition (Paszak, 2020)

Whatever the case, it proves beyond doubt the existence of a competition between these two hegemons.

1.7.2 US-China Competition and Its Economic Impact on Africa

1.7.2.1 China-Africa Economic Relations

The US-China competition has economic implications for every region of the world. This is mainly due to the immense space the two economies occupy within the global system. In Africa, much literature has been devoted to addressing the economic implications of this competition on the continent.

Historically, Africa developed extensive relations with China dating to the colonial era when China supported many African liberation fighters in their fight against colonialism and the subsequent attainment of independence (Looy & Haan, 2006, Mlambo, Kushamba et al. 2016). The country later banded together with African countries to declare nonalignment and to ward off the dominance of the US and Soviet Union during the Cold War. (Mlambo, Kushamba et al. 2016) argued that the shared angst against colonialism and hegemonic dominance that bonded China and African countries later declined especially in the 1980s when many African countries attained independence and with stagnated economies. China turned to the West around this period. However, its relations with the West quickly soured in the early 1990s after the Tiananmen Massacre. China turned towards Africa again. As China's fortunes rose over the years, especially from 2000, the country has invested significantly in Africa's infrastructure, and given out loans, aid, and foreign direct investment among others.

Scholars, including (Zheng, 2016), (Crisafulli, 2018), and (Alden & Large, 2019) over the years argued that China's massive investment in Africa's infrastructure has been the main catalyst for the rapid expansion of infrastructural developments in the continent. These large-scale infrastructural investments are seen in the construction of roads, railways, ports, electricity, and telecommunication infrastructure across different countries in the continent. This argument buttresses the findings made by (Regissahui, 2019) whose study of Chinese economic relations

with Africa conclusively proves the huge infrastructural projects in different African countries funded by China. These projects have significantly boosted Africa's economic growth, lifting millions from poverty and creating millions of jobs for young African youth.

(Ahmad, Gull et al. 2019) further argued that China-Africa trade also soared from \$765 million in 1975 to over \$170 billion in 2018. According to the IMF, Sino-African trade presently stands at \$282 billion as of 2023. China is the largest importer of African goods while exporting large volumes of goods to the continent (Regissahui, 2019). The significant increase in trade has contributed to the rise of the middle class in Africa and fostered economic growth across the continent.

China is also Africa's largest bilateral trade partner with about 20% of the continent's produce exported to China and importing about 16% of annual imports from China (Tilouine, 2012). China overtook the US as Africa's largest trade partner in 2009. China is also the largest bilateral creditor of Africa, and its share of Africa's external debt presently stands at \$150 billion as of 2021 (Osman 2021), (Mutai, Cuong et al. 2024). China's Foreign Direct Investment in Africa has also increased over the years, rising to \$5 billion by 2022 (Tilouine, 2012).

As economically beneficial as this relationship has been, many others argue that it tends to trap the continent in huge debt cycles. According to (Mutai, Cuong et al. 2024), the concept of debt-trap diplomacy was coined to describe China's relationship with Africa and other developing regions. Noted critics of China – Africa economic relations have accused China of exploiting Africa's abundant natural resources, significantly depleting it, saddling the continent with huge debts through overpriced and shoddily constructed infrastructure projects, and contributing to the de-industrialization of Africa by flooding the African market with cheap products and thus making nonsense of Africa's attempt at basic manufacturing (Mutai, Cuong et al. 2024).

(Brautigam, Huang et al. 2020) for instance raised the issue of the risk of African countries falling into highly indebted countries due to the huge debts these countries are taking on from China to address needed infrastructural projects in the continent.

1.7.2.2 Impact of Chinese African Trade

The literature on the impact of the China-Africa trade relations and the huge investments in loans and foreign direct investments among others is mixed. It is acknowledged that China's trade with Africa, and its huge infrastructural investments in the continent have contributed significantly to the development of the continent. Ayodele and Sotola (2014) argue that Africa recorded an impressive growth rate of 5.8% in 2007. This growth rate they argue can be attributed to the huge Chinese investments in the continent around that time when the Chinese economy was hugely in need of natural resources from the continent. Subsequent loans, grants, and aid among others from China have contributed to improving economic conditions and the standard of living of millions of Africans. For instance, Owusu-Manu, Jehuri et al. (2019) in their study on the impact of infrastructural investments on economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa established a positive relationship between investments in infrastructure and economic growth, with electricity generation seen as a major catalyst to economic growth. China's mammoth Belt and Road Initiative which seeks to link Asia, parts of Europe, the Middle East, and Africa through infrastructural and financial connectivity is acknowledged to have increased economic activities and standard of living in countries and communities where the BRI projects passed through (Liu, Xu et al. 2020), (Kodongo & Ojah, 2016). Concerns however have been raised about the increasing debts on African countries, opaque and inflated contracts leading to increased corruption and debt burdens, substandard projects across the continent, and decimation of Africa's nascent industrialization drive.

1.7.3 US-Africa Economic Relations

US economic relations with Africa over the years have mainly centered on the giving of aid, establishing trade partnerships – for instance the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), and promoting the thriving of economic and democratic reforms (Liu & Tang, 2018). In ‘Aid, Political Conditionality, and Other International Efforts to Support Democracy in Africa’ (Hackenesch, 2019) argued that for a long while, US economic engagement with Africa has been premised on the assumption that democratic promotion, human rights, and good governance reforms are the cardinal principles that define the relationship. The US thus employs economic aid and sanctions, the proverbial carrot and stick to promote this relationship. The author, however, contends that with the rise of China and its hands-off approach which emphasizes non-interference in any country's domestic affairs and few conditionalities if any, many African countries find the Chinese model appealing, and thus many have turned to China for deepened economic relations. According to (Taylor, 2018) this is the main contributor to China’s rapid economic influence in Africa over the US and European models. Many countries not only find the China story much more appealing, but they also see its political model of consensus building and egalitarian and meritocratic political system worth emulating.

Following this, scholars have noted a dual system of engagement in Africa between the two superpowers. For instance, (Brown, 2023) notes that while China’s economic engagement with Africa focuses on infrastructure financing and development, the US mainly focuses on trade Washington consensus of trade liberalization, market reforms, and private sector development. As the author noted, though both models benefit the continent, it risks making Africa overly dependent on external actors and thus making it less self-reliant. Should Africa therefore jeopardize its relationship with any of these superpowers, it will lose much.

1.7.4 Political Implications of US-China Competition in Africa

The US-China competition also significantly impacts Africa's political landscape. Scholars like (Shinn & Eisenman, 2012), (Pitso, 2019), and (Moradi, 2019) argue that China's political influence in Africa is largely shaped by its non-interference policy, which allows it to engage with African countries irrespective of their governance models. Many African countries it appears are fond of the Chinese non-interference system in the internal affairs of their countries, and its governance systems. Some scholars however disagree. (Hodzi, 2018), and (Verhoeven, 2014) amongst others argue that the era of China's non-interference in Africa's internal affairs is over. (Hodzi, 2018) argued that China can no longer be "defined by its historical non-interference policy that most African countries are still obsessed with." (Zheng, 2016) however maintains that "the policy is unfavorable to China's national interest." This led (Gazibo & Lema, 2022) to conclude that China's present relations with Africa can be defined as "adaptive pragmatism". This they argue allows China "to get involved in Africa's peace and security landscape without overtly compromising its traditional posture on non-interference". The outcome of this is the continuing blossoming relations between China and countries that are perceived as autocratic and with less regard for participatory democracy across the continent. In contrast, the US in its dealings with Africa places its political and economic support contingent on good governance, democracy, and human rights, which largely has limited its flexibility in engaging with certain African governments (Kajunju & Keita, 2020). African leaders decry continued US lectures about human rights violations and democratic backsliding in their countries whenever they encounter US officials. The Chinese are ready to invest or engage in construction projects in their respective countries when they meet continental leaders. As noted by (Grimm, 2012) amongst others, China pledges and doles out billions of dollars in investments at the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) without raising concerns about individual country's internal affairs. They leave it to the leaders to sort things

out on their own. The same cannot be said of the USA. The US thus seems meddlesome to many continental leaders who are faced with ruling countries marked by different ethnic and religious communities and the difficult task of addressing poverty, inequality, and underdevelopment.

The literature on what constitutes China's true intentions in Africa is mixed, and scholars from different sides of the global divide argue on different tangents. In his testimony before the US government Economic and Security Review Commission, (Devermont, 2022) argued that "Beijing has long viewed African countries as occupying a central position in its efforts to increase China's global influence and revise the international order. Over the last two decades, and especially under General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Xi Jinping's leadership since 2012, Beijing has launched new initiatives to transform Africa into a testing ground for the export of its governance system of state-led economic growth under one-party, authoritarian rule" (Devermont, 2022). He subsequently noted that China "uses its influence in Africa to gain preferential access to Africa's natural resources, open markets for Chinese exports, and enlist African support for Chinese diplomatic priorities on and beyond the continent. The CCP flexibly tailors its approach to different African countries to instil admiration and at times emulation of China's alternative political and governance regime." (Devermont, 2022). They noted the huge infrastructure investments by China in the continent and the establishment of a Chinese military base in Djibouti as further evidence that China's true intentions in Africa are anything but benign. The implications for the US according to (Devermont 2022) is that "Taken together, the 54 countries in Africa are home to the world's youngest and fastest-growing populations and boast dynamic economies, a growing middle class, and an increasing footprint in global affairs. Therefore, the degree to which China succeeds in advancing its model in Africa will have significant consequences for U.S. political, economic, and military interests on the continent." (Devermont 2022)

Other scholars including (Campbell 2020) agreed that while China's primary focus in Africa presently is economic, its growing influence in African institutions such as the African Union and its increasing role in peacekeeping missions signal a broader geopolitical strategy. China constructed the African Union building in Ethiopia and gave it to Africa as a gift. It was meant to foster goodwill and friendly relations between China and the continent. It however was reported by the media that China had planted bugs in the AU building to monitor deliberations and proceedings without the knowledge of the AU (Tilouine 2012). The US thus views China's influence as a challenge to its strategic interests, as exemplified by the US's establishment of the "Prosper Africa" initiative, which seeks to counterbalance China's growing presence by promoting American private sector investment.

On the contrary, other scholars argue mainly that China's relations with Africa seek to promote South-South Cooperation, mutual benefits, and support for Africa's development (Moyo 2016). The political implications of this rivalry for African countries are complex. Some scholars, such as Whitfield (2019), argue that African leaders can leverage the US-China competition to gain better terms in their dealings with both powers. However, other researchers, including (Anshan 2022) warn that African countries may be forced to choose sides, potentially exacerbating internal political tensions or creating rifts in regional organizations.

1.7.5 Africa: Challenges and Opportunities

The US-China competition provides both challenges and opportunities for African countries. China has on the one hand been a major source of finance for infrastructural development in Africa, catalyzing continental linkages and providing hundreds of thousands of jobs. Continental leaders have tapped Chinese lending sources for investments and turned to the Chinese market for continental exports. This explains the continuing expansion of the African economy through the export of natural resources. (Mlambo, Kushamba et al. 2016) note that

China's infrastructural investments often bridge serious gaps that are often neglected by Western aid initiatives. In addition, China is a market for raw materials that has achieved economic growth through commodity exports from Africa which have led to the rapid increases in revenue of resource-rich countries such as Angola, Nigeria, Ghana, and Zambia (Alden 2017).

However, the competition comes with its own set of problems as well. As China pumps money into African infrastructure projects, concerns are being raised on the sustainability of the billions of funds it loans to the continent. (Mutize 2024) for example argues that Chinese loans have resulted in a “debt trap” situation which involves countries being unable to pay back the loan with the consequence of losing control over important assets or resources, particularly under China's Belt Road Initiative. Conversely, the demand by US officials for political and economic reforms could also be interpreted as intrusive or paternalistic to African government bodies leading them to resist cooperation with the US (Foster 2022)

As scholars such as (Mawdsley 2012) have discussed, one of the potential opportunities is for Africa to hold an existential power card on the global politico-strategic table by its geography. It observes that Africa has opportunities to negotiate better trading terms, attract more diverse investment, and leverage its political capital by playing off one against the other in Sino-US relations. This, however, needs the strong cooperation of good leadership in each region is sometimes inadequate.

1.7.6 Intervention Measures on Africa

Faced with the problems posed by US-China competition, some scholars have suggested that Africa should intervene to reduce cost and expand benefits. For instance, African countries need to rally around regional organizations (such as the AU and ECOWAS) to negotiate collectively with external powers (Cheru 2018). This would also ensure Africa has a collective

voice in global politics, limiting the capacity of outside powers to play one country against another.

A second suggestion is to broaden trade and investment relationships, lessening the dependence on US-China commerce. For instance, Zondi (2018) underscores that African countries must interact with other emerging economies from Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East without reliance on one external actor. African governments should also put debt sustainability at the top of their priorities list, and heed borrowing transparency, especially from China to prevent long-term debt crises (Mutize 2024)

Finally, scholars such as (Signé and Van der Ven 2019) assert that Africa should take the initiative to resolve some of the continent's development issues, for example encouraging intra-African trade through the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). This would lessen dependence on external powers and produce more robust economies that are resistant to outside market thrust.

1.7.7 Conclusion

US-China competition is altering Africa economically and politically. Given that it provides alternative models of engagement in African countries, though competing and cooperating with both powers pose a dilemma for Africa. A review of this literature indicates the need for Africa to adopt strategies that would ensure its interest is curated, by balancing engagements with both powers and establishing mechanisms that support regional cooperation efforts as well sustainable development. In so doing Africa would be able to turn this rivalry between the US and China into a means of self development, security from pressures by powerful nations and autonomy on the global stage.

In a third view, scholars contend that Africa ought to pursue self-development solutions including advocating for intra-African trade under the African Continental Free Trade Area

(AfCFTA). By contributing to national income generation, such infrastructures would also facilitate greater financial and economic independence from abroad – making these nascent economies more resilient in the face of external pressures (Signé and Van der Ven 2019).

1.7.8 Significance

This study will enable policymakers to better understand and take opportunities out of this evolving competition while adeptly ensuring that Africa is not negatively impacted in any way by this Sino-American competition.

1.7.9 Arrangement of Chapters

Chapter 1: Introduction –background, problem statement, research questions and objectives

Chapter 2: The US-China relations

Chapter 3: Economic and Political impact of the US-China in Africa

Chapter 4: Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations.



CHAPTER TWO

THE US-CHINA RELATIONS

2.1 Introduction

The US-China relationship is the defining relationship of the 21st century. This relationship is considered the most consequential geopolitical relationship in the history of humanity, marked by cooperation, competition, rivalry, and open hostility amid intense economic engagement at different points in time. How this relationship is managed will determine the future and direction of the present international order.

2.2 Origins of the US-China Relationship

The first contact between the US and China occurred in August 1784, with the arrival of an American trade ship, The Empress of Guangzhou, in China thus establishing American access to the lucrative Chinese trade in silk, porcelain, tea, and precious minerals (Monroe 2013). The Chinese city of Guangzhou was the point of trade for Western nations. Trade then, was the glue that established and bonded this relationship between the Chinese kingdom and the new country of America.

The next set of Americans to contact China fifty years after the arrival of the Empress of China were missionaries who went to evangelize in China in 1830. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions sent Reverends Elijah Bridgman and David Abeel to China to spread the gospel. The missionaries arrived in 1834 in Guangzhou. These Ministers of the gospel were later followed in 1834 by Dr Peter Parker, a medical missionary who also arrived in Guangzhou and established a small clinic that would later become the Guangzhou Hospital.

The first Chinese contact with the US also followed in 1785 with the arrival of three Chinese sailors in the US. Chinese culture was further entrenched and made known in 1839 when Nathan Dunn established a museum with huge Chinese collections of art and artifacts (Monroe 2013).

The US-China relations however officially began in 1844 with the signing of the treaty of Wangxia by China and the US. The treaty was special in that it gave “the U.S. most favored nation status with China and granted Americans various privileges in China” (Monroe 2013)

The establishment of formal relations did not however lead to growth in the relationship. The US government and businesses were frustrated by China’s “Tribute System” which guided China’s relations with foreigners and foreign trade. Since this system was mainly arbitrary, the Americans grew frustrated and lost interest in China. However, relations were still maintained, and America eventually got the Qing dynasty (1644–1912) in China to grant special exemptions to the Americans as other powers such as France and Britain had done. However, trade was still difficult because access to Chinese ports and other issues hampered trade. These were however resolved with the signing of the treaties of Tianjin between China and other foreign nations in 1858. American businesses and traders could access many Chinese ports with special privileges extended to foreign traders, and businesses. The establishment of formal diplomatic offices in Beijing also began shortly after the signing of these treaties (Monroe 2013)

2.3 The Emergence of Tension: Parallels to 1849

Chinese labourers, derisively called “coolies” began arriving in the US from 1849 to also benefit from the California Gold Rush. The California Gold Rush referred to the discovery of large gold deposits in the state of California that led to unprecedented migration to the state to search for gold. Cheap, unskilled, uneducated, and ready to work for less, these Chinese

workers were employed to work in railroads, mines, and other tedious works. However, as huge numbers arrived in search of gold and jobs, it created tension within the US and with mounting concerns, the American government placed restrictions on Chinese arrival in the US. Measures such as the Page Act which prohibited the arrival of Chinese labour to the US, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 which suspended immigration from China to the US for ten years, and the Bayard-Zhang Treaty which prohibited Chinese migration to the U.S. for up to 20 years were all passed (Monroe 2013). These legislations of varying forms continued after 1902 even when the last of these legislations, the Greary Act, which mandated the removal of Chinese immigrants had lost effect. The continued marginalization of Chinese immigrants eventually led to the Chinese population in the US being concentrated in Chinese settlements in some towns and cities. These Chinese settlements became known as “Chinatowns” in the US.

However, in China, growing anti-foreigner sentiment in China eventually led to widespread protests called the “Boxer Rebellion”. The revolution, supported by peasants across China sought to drive all foreigners out of China since they were seen as profiting from the Qing dynasty that was considered weak and unable to stand up to foreign aggression. The group was led by a Chinese group referred to as Yihequan (Righteous and Harmonious Fists) and employed a mix of boxing and other local rituals to attack foreigners to drive them out of China. The targets of the group were mainly foreign missionaries, businesses, and embassies. The Boxers were crushed by the combined force of Chinese and foreign militaries with the US contributing a huge number of soldiers. The Qing dynasty paid reparations over \$330 million.

However, growing anti-foreign sentiments continued and were now directed at the Americans who the Chinese blamed for leading the foreign militaries to crush the local revolution. This anti-foreign sentiment led to the boycott of American businesses and products in China galvanizing Chinese nationalism (Sutter 2013), (Monroe 2013) These events led to the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911 further straining US-China relations for a long period.

2.3.1 The Frozen Relations: China -US Relations From 1949 – 1971

US-China relations entered a turbulent period marked by conflict and occasional cooperation to tackle select problems. Some factors that led to this frozen relationship between the two superpowers will be discussed under subthemes.

2.3.2 The Chinese Civil War 1945 to 1949: The US as an Unreliable Mediator

China descended into a civil war pitting its two main political parties, The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) led by Mao Zedong and the Chinese Nationalist Party known as the Kuomintang (KMT) led by General Chiang Kai-Shek against each other. The two parties had united to fight off the Japanese occupation of China and the fragile unity between them quickly gave way immediately following the defeat of the Japanese in the Second World War (Cucchisi 2002). The conflict between these two parties led to a civil war in China. This Civil War was an intense military struggle for the future and direction of the state of China. The civil war finally ended with the defeat of the nationalist party and the establishment of the People's Republic of China on 1 October 1949 (Pepper 1999), (UK National Archives).

The US had earlier supported the Kuomintang under General Chiang Kai-shek with much aid and ammunition in its fight against the Communists. (SHER) argued that “By 1949, the US had provided the GMD with an estimated \$2 billion worth of economic aid—equivalent to one-eighth the amount granted to countries in Europe under the Marshall Plan” (SHER). The US also “provided the GMD with \$800 million worth of funds for military procurement and sent direct transfers of 97 naval vessels” (SHER). Aside from providing substantial aid and military support, the US government also officially recognized the KMT as the legitimate government of China. This was seen in America as appropriate since a communist takeover of China would embolden the Soviet Union to spread its communist philosophy in much of Asia and other parts of the world.

The escalation of the Chinese Civil War compelled the Truman government in the US to attempt mediation between the Nationalists and the Communists. However, Mao Zedong and the Communists regarded the US as a biased mediator since the US earlier recognized the KMT as the national government of China.

The Chinese Civil War ended in 1949 with the defeat of the Nationalists by the CCP. General Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalist forces moved to the Island of Taiwan. The People's Republic of China (PRC) was officially established, and the Chinese Communist Party was declared the sole party of the State. The US however continued its recognition of the nationalist government in Taiwan as the legitimate government of China. This development led to strained relations with the CCP on the Taiwan question issue to date. The Chinese government considers Taiwan as a renegade province of China that needs to be defeated and incorporated into the Motherland, while the US continues to offer substantial aid and military support to Taiwan as an expression of support.

2.3.3 The Korean War 1950-1953: The US and China on Opposite Sides

US and China's relations were further strained from the 1950s until the opening to China in the 1970s. A pivotal battle that brought the two nations as combatants on opposite sides was the Korean War of 1950.

(Chang-II 2010) identified ideology and politics as the two main causes of the Korean War of 1950 to 1953. In ideology, the communist states of China, North Korea, and the Soviet Union desired to establish the Korean Peninsular as a communist enclave, devoid of capitalist interference. These Communist states considered South Korea an obstacle to the creation of a communist enclave. Politically, the Soviet Union established an alliance with North Korea and sought to use North Korea as a buffer state against any future attack against Russia. Soviet leader Josef Stalin therefore prodded Kim Il-sung, the North Korean leader to refuse the

establishment of one state of Korea, but rather two different states. This led to the formation of two Korean States with support from the United Nations. China meanwhile needed aid from the Soviet Union and Soviet support to break off Western isolation. China declared support for the North Korean leader in the case of war with South Korea. Armed with the support of two communist states, North Korean leader Kim Il-sung mounted a surprise attack on South Korea to conquer and annex the entire Korean Peninsula for communism.

The surprise attack by North Korea against the South quickly galvanized the Americans under the leadership of the United Nations forces to come to the defense of South Korea. The US-led United Nations Command (UNC) Forces pushed the Soviet-backed North Korean forces far beyond the 38th Parallel to almost the border with China. Fearing the prospects of a capitalist state on its borders and to provide support to the Communist state of North Korea, China came to the assistance of the North Korean forces.

This brought the US and China to the opposite ends of a war. This war ended on a stalemate with an armistice signed to end the war and to maintain the Korean borders at the 38th Parallel. The war brought the forces of all the global powers at the time – The US and its allies, the Soviet Union and China – against each other for a conventional war. This war further strained Sino-American relations (Malkasian 2001), (Chang-II 2010)

2.4 US-China Rapprochement and Normalisation of Relations 1970-1979

The relations between the US and China improved significantly following US-initiated conciliation attempts. This conciliation was necessary to pull China away from the ambit of the Soviet Union as the Cold War intensified between the US and the Soviet Union. These events are discussed further.

2.4.1 Rapprochement

Some factors paved the way for the rapprochement between the US and China. Key among these factors is the Sino-Soviet split (Li 2011). The relations between China and the Soviet Union declined considerably from the late 1950s to the early 1960s. This is mainly ideological differences between these countries as to the form of communism to pursue. There was also the issue of border disagreements between the Soviet Union and China that almost resulted in a military clash at Zhenbao (Damanskii) Island (Kuisong 2000), and finally, the failure of the Soviet Union to support China during the Korean and Vietnamese wars among others led to a decline in the friendly relations between these two powers.

Tentative diplomatic efforts to thaw relations between China and the US include the Ping Pong Diplomacy (Eckstein 1993). A meeting in Japan in 1971 for the World Table Tennis Championships led to informal conversations between the Chinese and American teams with the Americans complimenting the Chinese for their exceptional tennis skills. The conversation evolved into a friendly relationship between the two teams throughout the tournament. Chairman Mao Zedong on hearing of the blossomed relationship between the two teams invited the American tennis team to visit China for a tournament. The American team accepted the competition and went to China in 1971. They also invited the Chinese to visit the US for a return match. The use of sports competition between the two countries warmed their relations and paved the way for the visit by National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger to China in 1971. Therefore, the Sino-Soviet split and the use of sports, as well as the commitment of Chairman Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai (China) Richard Nixon, and Henry Kissinger (US) eventually led to the warming of relations between China and the US.

The freeze in relations between these two previous allies opened the way for Henry Kissinger, President Nixon's National Security Advisor, to take a secret trip to China in 1971 to mend fences with China over contentious issues from the war in Indochina, US relations with Japan

and its support for Taiwan among others to pave way for rapprochement and normalization of relations. This paved the way for President Richard Nixon's visit to China on February 22, 1972, marking the official rapprochement between the US and China.

The US under President Jimmy Carter officially recognized the People's Republic of China in 1979 and adopted the "One-China Policy". The US adoption of the One-China policy compelled it to sever diplomatic relations with the government of Taiwan. This paved the way for Premier Deng Xiaoping of China to visit the US. This period ushered in a time of stability in US-China relations and increased commercial and social relations between the two states.

There were contentious issues that nearly derailed the relationship between the US and China in those days. These include the lingering question on Taiwan, the Tiananmen Massacre, and the US accidental bombing of a Chinese embassy in Belgrade during the NATO intervention in Yugoslavia in 1999.

2.4.2 Tiananmen

The Tiananmen massacre of 1989 nearly derailed US-China relations. Young students in China fed up with growing corruption and unaccountable political leadership took to the street in protest. They converge on Tiananmen Square to protest the growing economic hardships and increased corruption within the CCP. The Chinese leadership frustrated with the growing protest eventually asked the Chinese army to move in on 4th June 1989 and crushed the demonstration (Lui 2000). Some people estimate that over one thousand fatalities were recorded while others put the figure at several hundred. With Pressure from Congress, the US government responded by suspending arms sales to China, and other high-level security cooperation. The government also granted visas to Chinese students who felt threatened by the Communist Party for their role in the demonstration. This event and the response by US strained relations between the US and China briefly (Hyer 1996).

2.5 The Entwined Economies: Post-2000

Relations between the US and China stabilized and flourished in the late 1990s to the 2000s. The US facilitated China's accession into the World Trade Organization (WTO) after lengthy and contentious negotiations amid protests from some senators from both sides of the Senate, interest groups, and some individuals.

The post-2000s marked an unprecedented growth in China's economy as it liberalized certain sectors of its economy. This also led to rapid investment by American and other foreign businesses. This unprecedented investment led to the Chinese economy averaging 8-10% growth annually for decades lifting over 700 million Chinese out of poverty. (ARNAUD, BENDINI et al. 2016) contended that "China's new economic approach instigated in the 1980s, focused on exports and on a unique market economy, turned out to be very beneficial for the country and for the rest of the world in terms of trade and international peace. In 2014 the IMF rated China as the first economic power in the world measured in purchasing power parity (PPP), producing 17 % of the world's GDP with the US following close behind with 16 %. Chinese per capita income rose annually at a rate of 8-10 %" (ARNAUD, BENDINI et al. 2016). While China liberalized certain sectors of its economy, its economic model is designed on state-led economic growth with active private sector participation. Because of this, China invested in its State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and granted them heavy subsidies and interest-free loans. This enabled these SOEs to produce and export goods in large quantities cheaply. The manufacture and export of large quantities of cheap goods proved beneficial to American consumers and the world. US households saved billions of dollars with easy access to cheap products from China. It also accrued billions of dollars to American and Chinese businesses in savings and provided global advantages to these businesses. The businesses then invested in research and innovation further propelling their capacity and reach globally (CFR). The US Council on Foreign Relations noted that American imports from China rose from \$100 billion

in 2000 to more than \$400 billion in 2023. America exported hundreds of billions of goods to China, fostering closer integration between the two economies. However, A notable downside to China's huge manufacturing capacity and its access to the US market led to a decline in manufacturing in the US and other regions of the world. This created discontent and thus marked the beginning of the trade war between China and the US.

2.6 The Cold War Drums: From Integrated Economies to Emerging Cold War

2.6.1 Areas of Contention

The US-China relations have gone through contention, cooperation, and competition. It is now considered fraught with intense disagreements with efforts by the US to decouple its economy and its allies from China and to rather re or friend-shore its manufacturing and economic engagements with friendly states that share in US values. This is because there are areas of contention between the two economies with experts arguing that if the relationship is not managed well, it could pose an existential problem to the world. Some of these contentious issues include: China's Belt and Road Initiative, the Taiwan Question, the South China Sea, and China flooding the US and the West with overcapacity to weaken the Western industrial base, and issues of human rights. Some of these are discussed below.

2.6.2 The Belt and Road Initiative

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) also known as One Belt One Road (OBOR) was announced by President Xi Jinping in 2013 in Kazakhstan. Its launch is considered the definitive arrival of China within the international system as a great power and its desire to challenge America's dominance of the post-World War II international system (Aoyama 2016). The BRI is considered "China's greatest international economic ambition, aiming at stimulating economic development in a vast region covering sub-regions in Asia, Europe, and Africa, which accounts

for 64% of the world population and 30% of world GDP” (Huang 2016). It seeks to connect over 150 countries through infrastructure development, trade connectivity, finance, and people-to-people exchange among others. It is a trillion-dollar initiative that seeks to reach up to 64% of the global population and over 4.4 billion people. “Geographically, the Silk Road Economic “Belt” is consisted of three general routes. The first route is from China through Central Asia and Russia to Europe (Baltic Sea). The second route is from China through Central Asia and West Asia to the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean. And the third route is from China through Southeast Asia and South Asia to the Indian Ocean. And the Maritime Silk “Road” runs from China's coastal ports through the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean, extending to Africa and Europe; and also from China's coastal ports through the South China Sea to the Pacific Ocean. The China–Pakistan and Bangladesh–China–India– Myanmar economic corridors will also be closely coordinated with the “Belt” and the “Road” economies” (Huang 2016).

The initiative has however received concerns in the US and other Western capitals. Notable scholars including Francis Fukuyama contend that the initiative is an attempt by China to challenge the American-led economic architecture which underpins the international system. He argued that “an historic contest is underway over competing development models ... between China, on the one hand, and the United States and other Western countries, on the other, ... [whose] outcome will determine the fate of much of Eurasia for decades to come” (Fukuyama 2016 cited in (Dunford and Liu 2019)). Others also argue that it serves an opportunity for China to bring countries in the Global South to significant debts in its attempt to invest in infrastructural development. Countries that fail to pay off these debts will have significant state assets seized by China. Others also maintain that the initiative will fail due to its sheer scale and prospects of regional instability (Rolland 2017).

2.6.3 Taiwan Question

The Taiwan issue has not been resolved, and presently serve as a major trigger point in the growing contentious relations between the US and China. Washington has adopted a principle of strategic ambiguity as it relates to Taiwan, not explicitly ruling out coming to its defense should China attack Taiwan. China on the other hand has not ruled out using military invasion to bring the renegade province within the state of China. The One-China Policy serves to ensure the continuation of peaceful relations between China, Taiwan, and the US. However, Taiwan's strategic role in semi-conductor manufacturing, accounting for 90% of global production as well as its shared values with the US in terms of democracy, human rights, and free trade among others have made US leaders from both Democratic and Republican parties vow to come to its defense should China attack it with force (Hsieh 2020). This concern is borne out of China's growing assertiveness and threat of the use of force to annex and unify Taiwan. President Xi Jinping maintains that the Taiwan challenge should not be passed to the next generation but should be resolved by his generation (Olando 2020). US President Joe Biden has also said on three different occasions that the US will respond with military force should China invade Taiwan to forcefully unite the province (Olando 2020) US intelligence community members keep reporting that China is likely to invade and forcefully unify Taiwan by 2027 or earlier Bloomberg (2024).

2.6.4 Trade War

US-China relations entered a contentious period following the beginning of the growing trade disputes between the two superpowers. It began with the US accusation of Chinese theft of American intellectual properties, the high trade deficit between China and the US, and the theft of trade secrets. America also had cause to complain of unfair Chinese trade practices such as the subsidizing of State-Owned Enterprises and forcing American and other foreign firms to hand over technology as a condition for access to the Chinese market.

(Liu and Woo 2018) distilled the drivers of the US-China trade war to three factors: “(a) the concern that China’s chronically large trade surplus was depressing job creation in the U.S.; (b) the concern that China was using illegal and unfair methods to acquire U.S. technology at an effectively discounted price; and (c) the concern that China seeks to weaken U.S. national security and its international standing”. Zhang, Y. (2018), however, argued that the cause of the US-China trade war can be classified into two: economic and political. On the economic front, the US wants to reduce the huge trade deficit with China. Politically, the US seeks to reduce China’s rapid advances as a high-tech export country and thus stifle its aim of becoming a global superpower.

President Donald Trump in 2018 therefore imposed high tariffs on over \$550 billion of Chinese exports to the US while China imposed tariffs on over \$180 billion of US exports to China. This was followed by the imposition of restrictions on Chinese telecommunication firms Huawei and ZTE, and other Chinese technology companies' access to high-tech US products or made with US patents.

The Biden administration has maintained the tariffs imposed by the Trump administration, and in some cases imposed harsher tariffs, especially on semiconductors. These among others have significantly strained the US-China relations. Some analysts regard the development as the beginning of a Cold War between the US and China as it was with the Soviet Union.

2.6.5 Other Points of contention

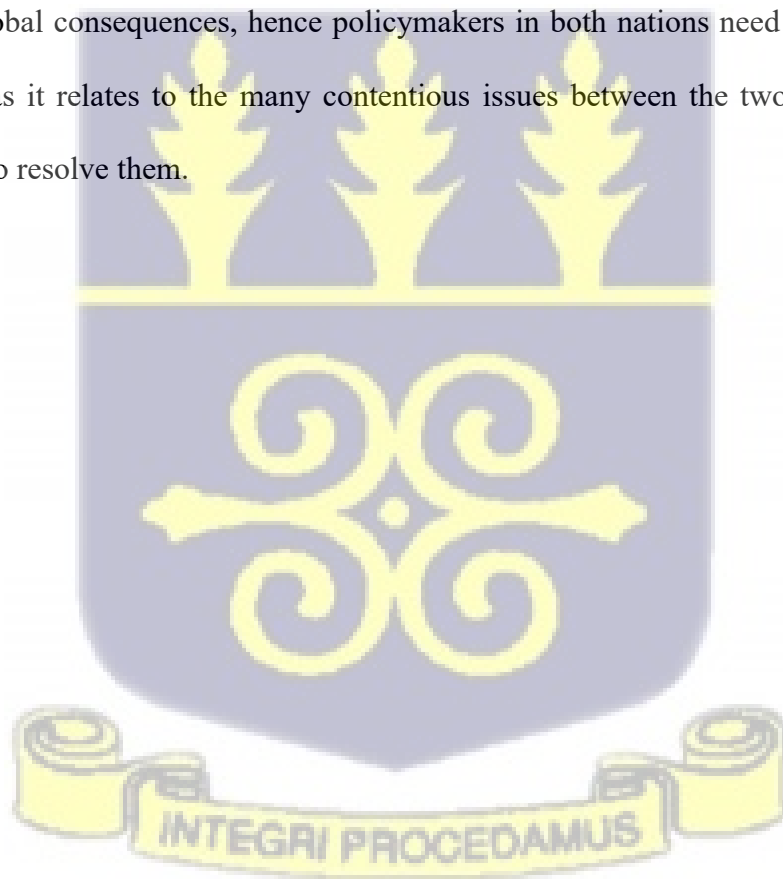
China-US relations have other significant sources of contention. A notable issue of intense disagreement is the South China Sea. China claims large portions of the South-China Sea as its territory. This has brought it sharply into disagreements with its neighbours, especially the Philippines, and Vietnamese who claim Chinese encroachment of their maritime territory. The

US seeks to support its allies, particularly the Philippines and ensure freedom of navigation and equal opportunities for all states Scobell, A. (2018).

The US also decries China's poor human rights records and its treatment of minority groups especially the Ughurs, religious minorities, and the LGBTQ+ community among others. These issues have all made the relationship between China and the US challenging.

2.7 Way Forward

There is the need for a stabilized relationship between the US and China since the benefits that will increase to both States and the world are immense. However, if this competition and disagreements are not well handled, the US and China will end up in a war that may lead to catastrophic global consequences, hence policymakers in both nations need to clearly define their interests as it relates to the many contentious issues between the two states, and take decisive steps to resolve them.



CHAPTER THREE

THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE US-CHINA COMPETITION IN AFRICA

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the core of the research. It analyses the data collected from interviews and secondary literature and addresses the research questions raised in the first segment of the work. It discusses the economic and political implications under various themes. The first segment will discuss the perspectives of some of the respondents on the US-China competition before narrowing down on the economic and political implications of the competition on the continent.

3.2 The Re-emergence of Bloc Politics and Hegemonic Struggle

Data from the field through interviews and extensive reading of secondary literature reveals that African political leaders, policymakers, diplomats, and scholars are keenly following the competition between the USA and China though they prefer to keep quiet about it. This is because, for them, the competition reminds them of the Cold War, which was fought bitterly between the USA and the Soviet Union, with global ramifications. They therefore understand that it is wise to quietly observe the competition in its various forms as it takes different forms. This was re-echoed by a senior Deputy Director of the Ghanaian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration (MFARI) Ambassador Mohammed Imoro. When asked whether African leaders were also following the US-China competition, he told me that from where he sits,

“all that is happening hinges on bloc politics and also the fight for economic hegemony”.

Asked to explain further why he thinks continental leaders are not vocal about the competition as is common in Southeast Asia, he explained further that:

“continental leaders are not vocal because it hinges on bloc politics, and you have the Western and Eastern model. The world leaders, the US and the Chinese are engaged in this competition. Other world leaders are divided along this line, for example, countries like Russia, Iran, and North Korea will support China while the European bloc will support the Americans which means from the outset, they have lost their voice, they have identified with a side. Those of us who are at the bottom of the Global South, like Ghana, you won't want to be vocal so that your utterances will be misconstrued and to be understood to mean that you're aligned to the American or the Chinese side, and it is important to keep your relationship with both sides”.

This view reflects the observations of Paul Frimpong, Executive Director of the Africa-China Centre for Policy and Advisory, a prominent Civil Society Organization (CSO). He said his organization monitors global developments as they relate to African development journey but more so, on Africa-China relations. He also framed the competition as a rivalry between two superpowers as they fight for hegemonic control over the global system as was observed during the Cold War a few decades back.

3.3 Should Africa be Concerned

In a discussion with the Atlantic Council, a prominent think tank in the US in 2020, President Uhuru Kenyatta said Africa as a continent was "very concerned" about the competition between the US and China and how regions like Africa are becoming like places to tussle for in the contest. Likening the competition to a return to the Cold War era, he said

"Western countries, and their counterparts in Asia and the Middle East, are returned to competition over Africa, in some cases weaponizing divisions, pursuing proxy actions and behaving like Africa is for the taking. "Well, I want to tell you it is not" (Olando 2020).

This sentiment is shared by leaders in Southeast Asia who also see the competition as having a significant impact on the region. At the annual Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore noted that the Southeast Asian region was observing "with great concern" about the developing competition between the US and China within their region. He mentioned that

"ASEAN has a direct interest since tensions could easily stoke existing flashpoints in the region and undermine the peace, prosperity, and stability that we have all enjoyed for decades" Ong (2023).

This was one issue I wanted to understand from the perspective of my respondents considering that the US-China competition is a global contest that certainly will have global ramifications. When asked whether Africa as a continent should be concerned about the competition. Paul Frimpong of the Africa-China Centre for Policy and Advisory said

"It is not a question about concern. For me, and from where we sit, we believe that we shouldn't allow our continent to become a field of contest between China and the US. That doesn't concern us. You will understand the US-China trade war, which of course affects almost everyone around the world, but mainly between the two countries. For us as Africa, we aim to project the development of the continent and find partners that we believe align with the continent's development ambition. And so it is not in our interests that there is competition between China and the USA. That is not what we are looking at. Where do we get the best deals from, the best partnerships that give us what we need for our development journey. And so, for

us, that is what we are looking at, and that doesn't mean that we are stopping at only China and the US, we are widening, trying to engage partners based on what we have".

This view was also echoed by Ambassador Mohammed Imoro who maintained that national interest was the underlying driver of the competition between the two superpowers. He said since some of Africa's interests are somehow linked to its relations with the superpowers, the continent should be concerned about the competition and the various ways it may impact the continent. Prof. Seidu Alidu, Head of Department of Political Science at the University of Ghana also agreed that Africa should be concerned but he thinks the continent should be concerned:

"in the sense that it could be positive for the development of the continent, and in that regard, a lot of awareness need to be created".

He maintains that the competition gives Africa a voice and recognition within the international system since America and its Western allies have now recognized that Africa has a formidable choice to turn to if they are not treated fairly. He outlined three reasons Africa should be concerned:

"One we should not be concerned because it gives us an alternative, and it opens the international system. The competition is good for Africa if we make the right choices. But we should also be concerned because such competitiveness could lead to the superpowers employing coercive means to make sure that we stick with them, or we trade with them, or we become their allies. Once it is moved beyond that element of using the right approach to coercive approaches, then we are in trouble. Two, we should also be concerned because if care is not taken, we are likely to see an economic Cold War visited on us with consequences. This may imply economic proxy wars, the use of multinational companies of these states to undermine or even overthrow governments that may not support their interests. And the third

concern has to do with the infrastructure for resources, where if you are unable to pay back, they take over very strategic assets of the state to repay that could be another concern”.

The position taken by respondents seems to be the position taken by Southeast Asian leaders who are openly speaking about the competition and the need to engage with both superpowers and not choose sides in the competition. Leaders in Southeast Asia are concerned and vocal because of the immediacy of the competition. For these nations, many share borders with China, and many also have territorial disputes with China. Any chaos out of the competition will have a direct impact on their region. Africa is however outside of the immediate region of this competition hence continental leaders have the luxury of maintaining silence publicly about the competition.

3.4 Should Africa Align East or West, or Stay Neutral

Many African countries argued for neutrality during the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union. To this end, many of these African countries were members of the Non-Aligned Movement which sought to carve a middle way for countries to relate with both the US and China. I sought to understand whether Africa should align with either the US, China or opt for neutrality. It appears many Africans would however prefer neutrality in the current contest between the US and China. When asked whether Africa should align with China and its allies mainly in the East, or align with America and its Western allies, or stay neutral in this contest, Prof. Seidu Alidu of the Department of Political Science said there are both advantages for aligning with one of the camps or staying neutral. According to him:

“If you do not align, you have the leeway to deal with either of them as or when you need. So, it gives you a choice, it gives you the bargaining power to woo both because you are not aligned. If you align it creates stability and trust. If you align, they know that as for you, you are always there for them. Whenever they need you, they can have you. It can build better

relationships, they can give you more support beyond that relationship, and they trust you, and value you. If you are not aligned there is limited trust, you can go either way, and the relationship will not go to the level of consolidation. It would be at the minimal level because you cannot be trusted, you can desert them anyway. So, China and America will be willing to deal more and deepen more in partnership with countries that are committed than those that are floating. If you are floating and not aligned, they may be skeptical about you, and not trust you and may not deepen relationships with you.”

However, when asked which option he would recommend for continental leaders as an option to pursue, he said he would advocate for neutrality in the present contest, and not alignment.

Mr. Paul Frimpong of the (ACCPA) and Ambassador Imoro both agree with his position. Mr. Frimpong noted that as a continent our aim should be to

“project the development of the continent, find partners that we believe align to the continent’s development ambition. And so it is not in our interests that there is a competition between China and the USA. That is not what we are looking at. Where do we get the best deals from, the best partnerships that give us what we need for our development journey. And so, for us, that is what we are looking at, and that doesn’t mean that we are stopping at only China and the US, we are widening, trying to engage partners based on what we have”.

He admonished Africa to stay out of the competition since aligning with either bloc would simply deprive the continent of the many gains it could gain from neutrality. He further used an analogy noting that:

“when you look at the US policy engagement in Africa compared to that of China, most people refer to that as software and hardware. So, the US plays the role of software, and China plays the role of hardware. So, in this sense, the continent picks and chooses the kind of program and project they want to do with or deal with within each country, that is the US and China. Again,

based on where we are and where we want to get to, so it is not a matter of concern, that not what we are looking at, we are looking at which partner brings the best opportunities and sees Africa as a partner and together we can work together to improve the state of the continent. For me that is what we should be concerned about”.

On his part, Ambassador Imoro notes that Ghana’s foreign policy has always been non-alignment, which he regards as the best for the continent in the present circumstances. He mentioned that:

“Ghana is a non-aligned country. And non-alignment is still relevant and active and so our foreign policy we don’t depart from our foreign policy at all. Even though Ghana has gone through a series of republics, we are now in the fourth republic, but the cardinal principle underlying our foreign policy has remained the same despite the constitution being drafted and redrafted. Now, we remain non-aligned because we recognize that this is bloc politics, and we are not going to get involved with any of them. We will only stay in our corner and observe them”.

3.5 Economic Implications of The Us-China Competition On Africa

The US-China competition will have an immense impact on various sectors of the African economy and its economic relations. Interviews with respondents in academia, civil society and diplomats reveal a nuanced picture. It largely will depend on Africa positioning itself well and making smart choices and decisions in its dealings with the superpowers. Some of the noted economic implications are discussed further below!

Economic Relations Between Africa, the US, and China

3.5 Brief Background

The US and China have had long and strong economic relations with African countries, sometimes adversarial. The aftermath of the Second World War and the subsequent wave of independence that swept through Africa from the 1960s to the 1970s and 80s saw many independent African countries turning to both America and its allies – African erstwhile colonial masters in Europe, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) for trade and economic support. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, America became the indispensable global hegemon to which all countries in the world were forced to relate and trade. In discussing American relations with Africa, (Owoeye 2021) placed US-African relations under three main frameworks: He opined that:

“It starts from America defining the continent from the prism of its NATO allies during the struggle for independence to considering Africa as an ideological battleground during the Cold War era and as a potent land for the spread of Islamic extremism during the post 9/11 era” (Owoeye 2021).

On trade in Africa, American firms dictated trade relations and terms, and formulated, implemented, and enforced norms and values relating to economic activities within the global system. Many African countries have thus related with America for a long time. American firms determined the prices at which African natural resources would be purchased, and loans were given with strict conditionalities which many African countries were forced to accept without much choice.

However, this relationship changed with the arrival of China in the global economic order especially from 2001 when China joined the World Trade Organization. The Chinese economy grew and expanded at a dizzying rate. The American scholar Graham Allison captured it best

when he summed it as “Never before in history has a rising power ascended so far, so fast, on so many different Dimensions” (Allison 2018). He described China’s rise as nothing short of spectacular:

“In a single generation, a nation that did not appear on any of the international league tables has vaulted into the top spot. In 1980, China’s gross domestic product (GDP) was less than \$300 billion; by 2015, it was \$11 trillion—making it the world’s second-largest economy by market exchange rates. In 1980, China’s trade with the outside world amounted to less than \$40 billion; by 2015, it had increased one hundredfold, to \$4 trillion. For every two-year period since 2008, the increment of growth in China’s GDP has been larger than the entire economy of India. Even at its lower growth rate in 2015, China’s economy created a Greece every sixteen weeks and an Israel every twenty-five weeks.” (Allison 2018)

It was an explosive growth that necessitated an increased appetite for natural resources. Africa became the continent to which China turned for the supply of its natural resources. For the first time in a long while, many African countries realized a partner they could turn to and trade with outside the US monopoly of trade and finance within the international system. China’s trade with Africa from that point has increased in leaps and bounds. China overtook the US as Africa’s largest trade partner in 2009 importing billions of natural resources including oil, copper, cocoa, and gold among other resources to China and importing billions of goods (AfDB 2017). From \$10 billion of trade between China and Africa, trade soared to the present \$280 billion.



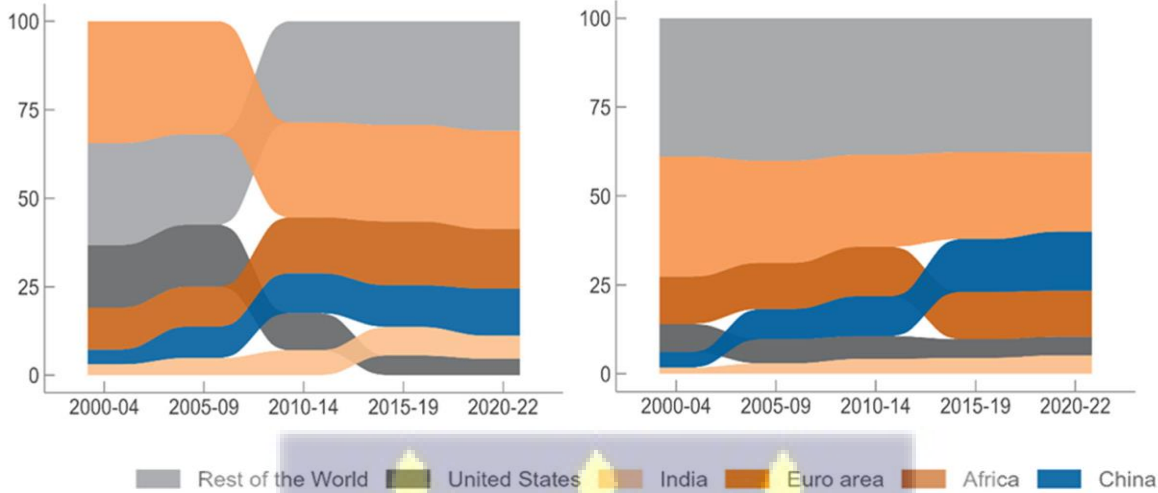
Figure 3.1 Africa: International Trade Partners, 2000 to 2022

1. Exports of Goods

2. Imports of Goods

(Percent of total exports, period average)

(Percent of total exports, period average)



Source: Chen, W., Fornino, M., & Rawlings, H. (2024)

China-Africa trade has largely depended on the export of natural resources to China from Africa, and the import of manufactured goods from China. China became the largest manufacturer in the world, and many Africans turned to China to import everything from machinery, equipment, and general goods among them. Thus, China's trade with the continent increased in countries that abounded in natural resources of interest to China. The African continent abounds in these resources hence China-Africa trade relations abounded. The implications of this were obvious from the onset. As China's economy grew, its taste of resources grew. Two great crises, the financial crisis of 2008/2009 and the global economic slump did not diminish China's inexorable rise nor its taste for natural resources. Many African countries with a steady flow of resources and an easy partner to export to, failed to diversify their economies. This later brought cataclysmic challenges for many countries in the continent when the Chinese economy slumped and its demand for resources was reduced.

In discussions with respondents and from extensive readings of secondary literature, it appears that US-China competition places Africa in a position to take advantage and increase its trade with both China and the US thereby catalyzing economic growth and creating millions of jobs for its growing youthful population. It was realized that Africa-China trade has been on the ascendance for a long period, though the Covid-19 pandemic affected trade a bit. Trade between Africa and China has rebounded and rather increased. Paul Frimpong of (ACCPA) noted that *“Last year, the trade volumes of over 280 something billion dollars in trade between Africa and China. The largest, coming back from the Covid-19, so I don’t see a decline in trade, if there is anything, I think there is a momentum being built from the China perspective, doing more with Africa than not doing more with the continent. We even tracked the recent FOCAC in Beijing, China outlined a 10-pillar plan around which the next three years will shape China-Africa relations and you can see that trade is one of the core pillars that was mentioned in these ten pillars, where China is offering a free market access to certain agricultural goods. In fact, that started in the 2021 FOCAC in Dakar, so they are going to allow least developed countries from around the world to have access to the Chinese market. So, it shows that there is still momentum. When you strike the trade numbers, China has been Africa’s largest trading partner since 2009 and it is still the same, it is still the largest trade partner of the continent. And the numbers, the volumes are increasing even at the back of Covid-19, the trade volumes were still higher than the previous years. So, I believe that there is an upward trajectory, and the commitment is still there, the appetite is still there to do more with Africa”*.

3.6 Trade Volume and Dynamics

3.6.1 A well-positioned Africa will be the Biggest Economic Beneficiary of the US-China competition

Extensive discussions with respondents and reading of the secondary literature and secondary trade data reviewed imply that Africa if it positions itself well, will be a major beneficiary of

the US-China competition. This assertion is borne out by trade data and by the convictions of my respondents.

China-Africa trade is growing in leaps and bounds, rebounding heavily after the Covid-19 pandemic. It is also observed that US-Africa trade is also rebounding, after almost cratering to its lowest in 2016, following its peak in 2008. This implies that both the US and China need allies, partners and friends to support them as they compete. Africa, a continent of fifty-four independent states with a huge youthful population and abundant natural resources is one of the continents both superpowers will look up to for partners and allies, and a key medium through which they will seek allies is through trade.

The chart below describes China-Africa trade. It shows a progressive growth in trade between China and the continent.

Figure 3.2 Growth of Export and Import Trade between China-Africa from 2000 to 2023



Ambassador Mohammed Imoro of the Ghanaian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration noted that:

“both sides will be trying to court or to kind of pull along those of us in Africa or the African countries, the weaker states in the international system. So, if you position yourself well, as a weaker state, as a country belonging to the industrial south, you may get benefits from both of

them. Because as they try to court or pull you along, they will try to induce you, and at the end of the day you will get economic opportunities like some debt cancelations, some inflows, and some investments, even though you don't subscribe to what they are trying to pull you from. So, at the end of the day, you may get something from them, but you may not be with them. That's the typical advantage you can get from the competition. The other advantage that I foresee is that you know Africa is seen as a place in this current century that everybody is struggling to get involved and the reason being that opportunities in the other parts of the continent have been tapped or have been. I don't want to call it exhausted, but at least they have exploited their opportunities, but Africa still has some opportunities so now all the continents are trying to have a major role in Africa so as the Americans or the Westerners were already in Africa, the Chinese and the Russians feel that they must also create space for themselves within Africa. So, with this kind of rivalry that is going on, if America was kind of dealing with us in their own terms, they will now feel that there is a need for them to now treat us in equal footing, so that we don't swing our allegiance to the Chinese and the Russians and the vice versa. They may also think that if they are getting into Africa, the best way for them is to present themselves as partners who are coming from an equal footing so that we can get space that they are trying to create. That will look like a better partnership than the partnership we have with the West".

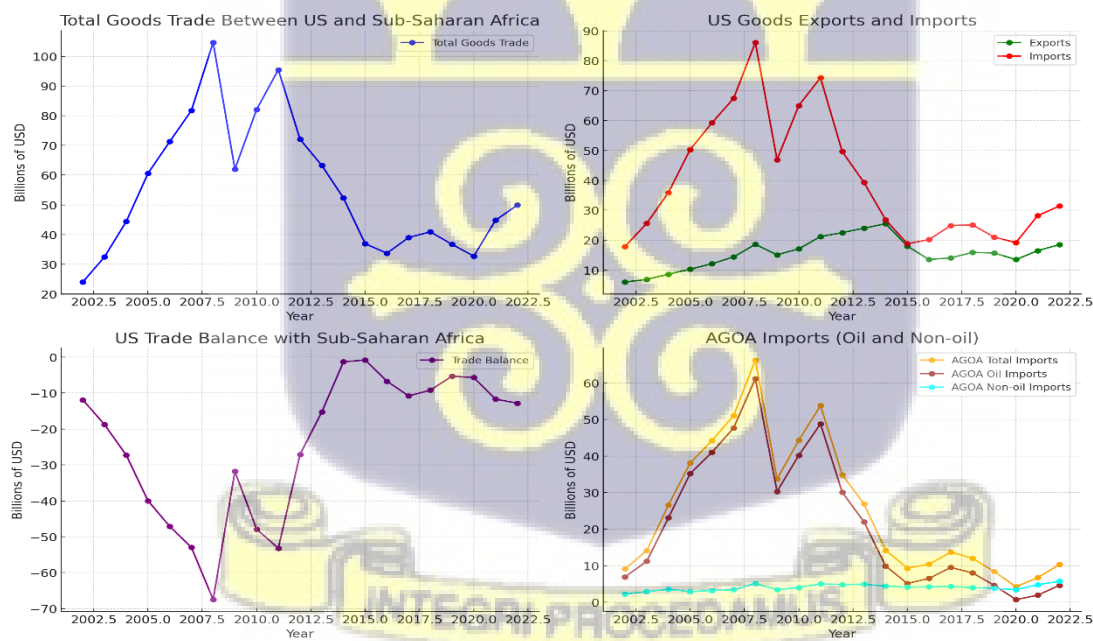
This same argument was made by Prof. Seidu Alidu of the Department of Political Science who also mentioned that years ago it was observed that: "international trade was weaponized as a foreign policy tool" by the US. The present competition thus serves as opportunity for African leaders to improve their economic relations with the two superpowers. Prof. Alidu noted that going forward:

"The seemingly coming in of China into Africa has created a lot of liberalization and competitiveness. The US now realizes that there is a strong partner that is competing with them. In that case it forces the US to now institute more pleasing, more favorable trade conditions

with Africa, knowing that there is now an alternative. Knowing that if they don't please, us we can change course. Also, it gives African countries a lot of choice, so that we are no longer tied to conditions and furthering the interests of the buyer. And, unless the US, and China do not impose conditions that are disruptive to the sovereignty of the state they work with. Even if they are concerned about human rights, they don't bring it in terms of trade, when they are concerned about LGBTQ issues, they don't bring it in terms of trade. So China is more liberal. And one other bid about the Chinese trade relationship is its investment largely in infrastructure”.

These charts also depict US-Africa trade in various goods, and it shows that trade had slowed down for a long time but recently started climbing up from 2022. This indicates a turn towards stronger economic relations between the US and Africa.

Figure 3.3 US-Africa Trade from 2002 to 2022



Source: U.S. International Trade Commission and U.S. Department of Commerce

The data reveals that US-Africa trade peaked in 2008 and began a steep decline till it got to its lowest in 2016 when the US-China competition with China heats up following the Trump

administration use of tariffs against China goods in the US. Trade with Africa was however low because the Trump administration favoured an American First policy which neglected many allies and partners. The Biden administration upon assumption of office tried to revamp and increase trade relations with Africa, but amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, trade was still sluggish. However, as the charts indicate, trade with Africa has started picking up with trade growing to a little over \$30 billion. Though that figure may seem very small compared to China-Africa trade, which is well over \$200 billion, the US has realized the significance of the African continent to the competition with China hence the attention on Africa and focus on trade again.

3.6.2 A Declining Hegemon (US) versus a Rising Hegemon (China) in Africa

From the perspective of the hegemonic stability theory, this data buttresses the view that the United States is a declining hegemon in Africa while China is a rapidly rising hegemon presently in the continent. This conclusion affirms the view of Owoeye, T. (2021) when he noted that:

“according to data from IMF, in 2000, the United States was Africa’s biggest trading partner followed by France while China and India were in 8th and 9th position, but by 2015 China and India have jumped to 1st and 2nd position while the United States and France have declined to 3rd and 4th position”.

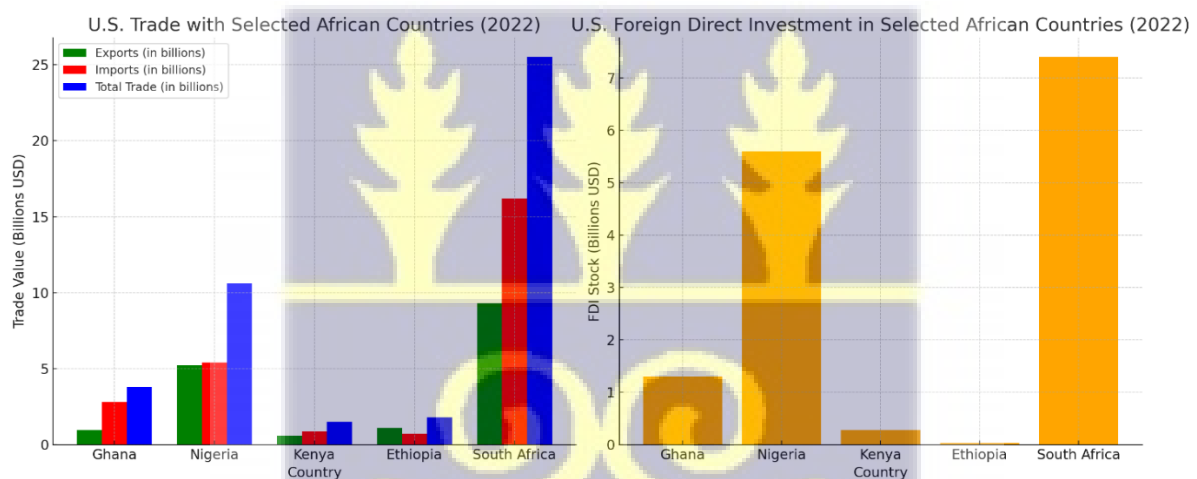
He further noted that:

“In quantitative terms, China total trade with Africa increased from US\$7.3 billion in 2000 to US\$93.3 billion and US\$135.9 billion in 2010 and 2015, respectively. Also, during the same time, India increased its trading position with Africa as its trading figures jumped from US\$6.9 billion in 2000 to US\$37.5 billion and US\$51.1 billion in 2010 and 2015, respectively (UNCTAD 2017; AfDB 2017). In contrast, the US total value in trade increased from US\$33.3

billion in 2000 to US\$98.4 billion in 2010 before declining to US\$45.3 billion in 2015. The figure for 2016 is as low as US\$22 billion indicating how trade relation between Africa and the United States has declined overtime” Owoeye, T. (2021:89).

The increase in trade, investment, and finance between China and Africa and the rapidly declining fortunes buttresses the view that China is a rapidly rising hegemon in Africa, deploying its significant economic might within the continent while the US has dominated the continent for a long while mainly post-World War II is now a declining economic power within the African sub-region.

Figure 3.4 US Trade Relations with Ghana, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya and South Africa

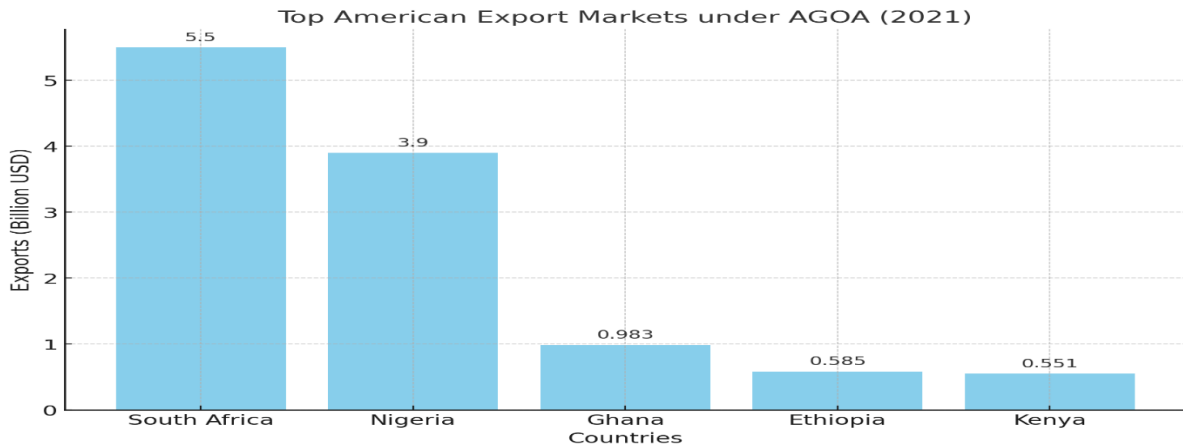


Source: Office of the United States Trade Representative

The chart indicates US-Africa trade which has begun to pick up especially from 2021 onwards. Trade with Ghana, South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, and Ethiopia all recorded significant improvements with foreign direct investments also marginally increasing in some countries. The US after marginalizing Africa for decades in terms of major economic initiatives has turned its attention to the continent. This is to ensure China does not fully take over trade with the continent and as a result, have heavy access to its natural resources and its youthful population.

The next chart describes America's top five leading export destinations in Africa under AGOA, with South Africa and Nigeria coming top and Ghana, Ethiopia, and Kenya following up.

Figure 3.5 American Export Markets Under AGOA in Five African Countries



The prospects of both China and the US directing economic activities towards the continent provide the clearest opportunity yet for continental leaders to appropriate the benefits of having access to FDI and markets to the world's largest economies. This will serve as an opportunity to create jobs for the teeming unemployed youth, improve infrastructure connectivity and improve the standards of living of their citizenry.

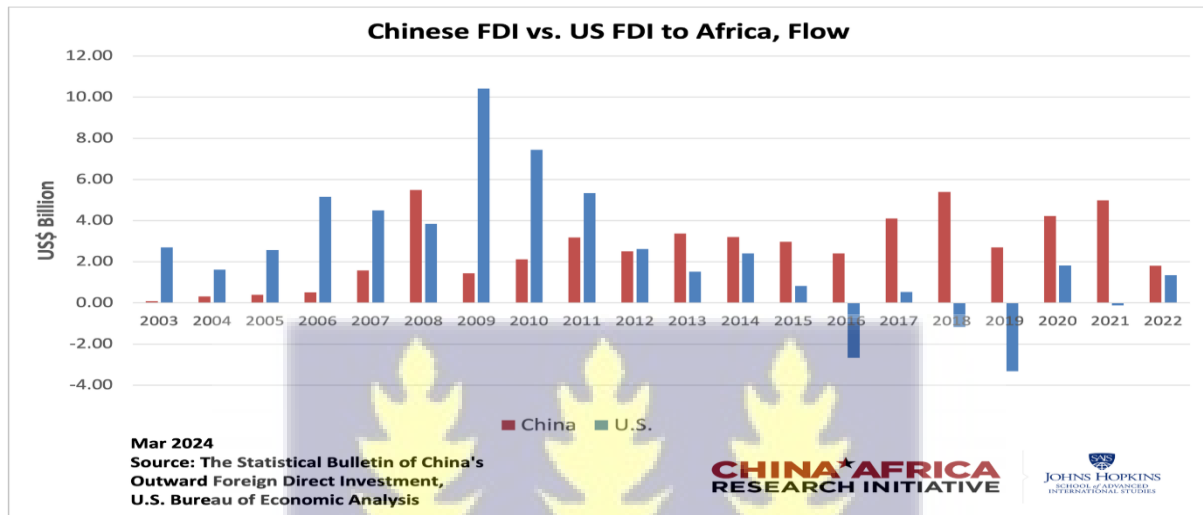
3.6.3 Foreign Direct Investment in Africa: A Chinese Century

The clearest indication that both the US and China will continue to court Africa and invest more in the continent as a strategic partner in the competition is seen in the flows of foreign direct investments into the continent. China is still dominant in FDI inflows into Africa, though the US is also trying to increase its inflows lately. What is appearing clearly though is that China has the upper hand over the US and will dominate over the US and its Western allies in the competition in Africa.

The chart below indicates FDI inflows into Africa by both the US and China. It clearly indicates that the Chinese are way ahead of the US in that regard. One thing that is becoming obvious is

that the US simply cannot compete with China in Africa over economic might, especially when it comes to trade, natural resource investments, or FDI. It can, however, compete with China over the soft power aspects of its values, system of governance, institutional buildings, and freedom, amongst others.

Figure 3.6 Comparison of Chinese and US FDI Flow to Africa



The chart indicates that US FDI in Africa peaked in 2009 and has been on the decline since, while China's been rising for many years since then. The presence and continual investment of China in Africa proves the value of the continent to China. The point may be made that China's economy is still growing, while the US economy is technologically advanced and sophisticated. Much of the resources Africa has to offer in the US may no longer be so much in demand by their economy. Oil used to be a major trade item between the US and Africa, but thanks to advances in shale technology, America is now the leading producer of oil in the world. The US is also leading the effort to transition from hydrocarbons to clean energy technology. China's economy however still relies primarily on the importation of oil from Africa and the Middle East. Its economy though rapidly advancing in technology and other dimensions still has much need for natural resources from Africa as it is the leading manufacturer in the world presently, and the leading trade partner for more than two-thirds of countries globally. Thus strategically,

Africa will matter so much economically to China in the future, but less relevant to the US in economic terms. Africa will matter to the US in strategic terms, especially as it relates to security and governance among other factors.

3.6.4 Natural Resources and Africa's Unique Place in Global Energy Competition

The US-China competition has implications for access to Africa's natural resources as the competition intensifies.

A noted implication of this contest will be for countries with certain high-demand natural resources such as cobalt, copper, and lithium among other minerals required for the present drive for clean energy in wind, solar, and electric vehicle batteries. These countries will be courted and contested by both China and the US. In Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and a few other countries will command global attention from these two superpowers because of the precious and rare minerals of cobalt, copper, nickel, and lithium. The race for electric vehicles battery manufacturing, and clean energy pitting the US and China means that these countries with these minerals will matter more than many others. These minerals are becoming indispensable to the race for supremacy in electric vehicles and clean energy technologies. Leaders in these countries will have a huge advantage in attracting investments from these superpowers in their economies.

China however already has more leverage than the US in its dealings within the continent especially when it comes to an advantage in mineral resources endowed countries. Benabdallah, L (2024) noted that China is already far ahead of the US in terms of investing in Africa's mineral resources. For instance;

“Chinese mining and battery companies have also invested USD 4.5 billion (EUR 4 billion) in lithium mines in recent years, driving many lithium projects in countries like Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Mali. China's investments in 15 out of 17 cobalt mining operations of the

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), many linked to the Belt and Road Initiative reflects this growing dominance” Benabdallah, L (2024:4).

The author proffered four main reasons why China has an advantage over the US. The first is support from the central government in the form of subsidies, access to interest-free loans, and financial and diplomatic support. These give Chinese companies bidding for natural resources in Africa an advantage over their Western counterparts. A second factor according to the author is the fusion of infrastructure development with natural resources bid. Chinese companies in bidding for natural resource contracts add the development of critical infrastructure like roads, railways and ports among others. This gives them an advantage over their American and Western companies. A third factor according to the author is the creative approach Chinese companies adopt to tackle issues when they are bidding for resources. An example is the resources for infrastructure approach that they came up with to exchange African resources for infrastructural development in some countries. The final reason according to the author is Chinese companies’ flexibility and ability to work under any kind of government, whether democratic or autocratic and corrupt. While the US has sanctioned Zimbabwe for electoral-related offenses, Chinese companies are actively investing in the country.

From my field data and readings, it becomes apparent that for many Africans, China stands at the gate with many of the solutions to the myriad challenges African leaders face. To start with, China’s story sells better in Africa. What is the China story? It simply is that China came from poverty, and with hard work, investments, and prudent management, it is now considered the second biggest economy in the world. China still identifies as a member of the Global South and its story; many African countries can relate to. It is the dream of every African, that their continent overcomes its seemingly unending woes and rises to prominence within the global system with dignity and hope for its population. Second is its respect for African leaders. Many African leaders believed until the arrival of China, they were only seen and not heard within

the Western capitals. These leaders complained of being treated with disdain and lectured, with their concerns being considered immaterial to many Western leaders. China comes, respectfully listens, and makes pledges which excites many African leaders. China also has a huge market and is considered the largest or the second-largest trade partner of all African countries. It is a huge challenge to be cut off from this sizable market. The Chinese economy also accepts many products from Africa without so much of stringent conditionalities. A third reason China has advantages over the US especially in resource-endowed states in Africa is that China does not come with many conditionalities about human rights, or environmental concerns nor talk of respect for minority rights, especially the LGBTQ community. China insists on negotiating with leaders in secrecy and gets to work right away when they get the green light. Many African leaders prefer dealing with them to the Americans and Europeans who come in with many conditionalities.

A unifying factor in the China-Africa trade relations is the commonalities in economic needs. The Chinese economy still has many needs from Africa, while it appears the American economy has little needs from Africa. The Chinese economy though maturing still has much needs for natural resources and oil which China still draws largely from the continent. The commonalities of economic needs will thus unify China with African leaders. However, China struggles to carry along the citizens of many African countries. This is because, the youthful population of African countries mainly agrees that a democratic system of government, free press, and independent judiciary are preferable to the continent where citizens can hold their leaders accountable. Thus, the few African countries that do not have democratic governance have become actively repressive, thus driving out many of its brightest minds. Many African citizens are also wary of China's intentions, though they appreciate their financial and investment support. Thus, there will be a gulf between the citizens and the rulers as they relate to China. Many African youth still dream of going to America than China.

It was realized that Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, DRC, and Zambia among several others are among the countries that will matter in the competition for natural resources. However, like already indicated, Chinese companies already have an advantage over their American counterparts in Africa.

3.6.5 Trade Deficit: A Huge Dilemma

It was realized that the US-China competition may exacerbate the African trade deficit with the superpowers. According to the African Natural Resource Management and Investment Center of the African Development Group, 62% of Africa's GDP depends on the export of natural resources. Africa's trade with both China and the US depends mainly on the exports of raw natural resources while importing machinery and finished goods. The chart below describes the composition of trade goods between China and Africa from 2000 to 2022. As is observed from the chart, Africa mainly exports natural resources including fuel and other primary commodities, and import machinery, chemicals, and other manufactured goods from China. The same is true for the US too. This creates a huge trade imbalance since Africa rather spend more in importing from these countries but gain less by exporting to these countries. As the competition increases with global ramifications, it will only exacerbate this trade imbalance between Africa and the superpowers, unless the continent can capture some value within the global natural resources value chain by either processing some of their resources in the continent and exporting it back to these markets.

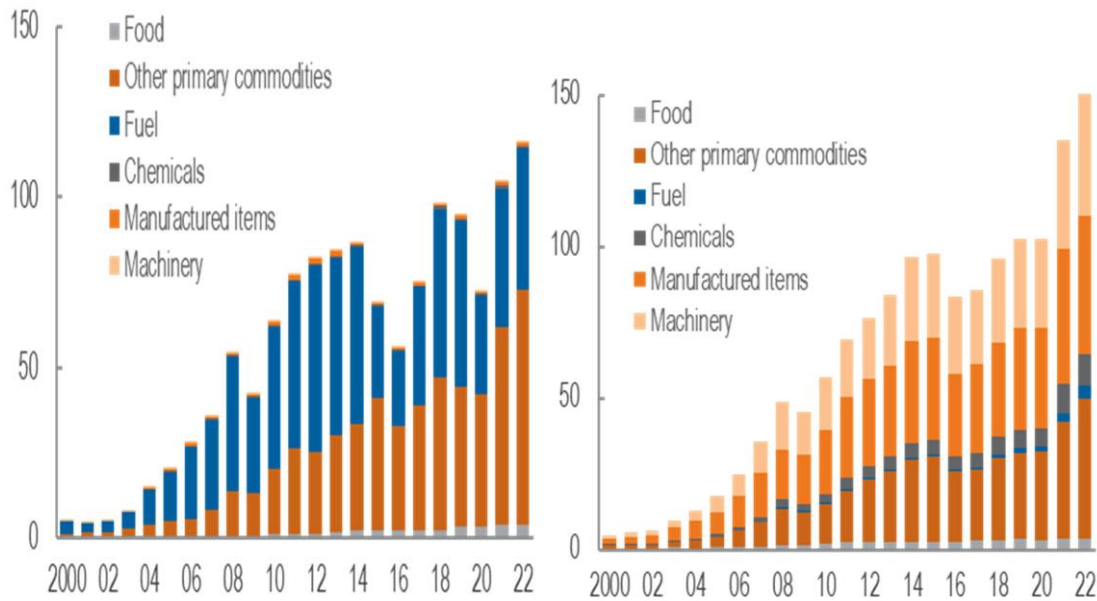
Figure 3.7 Composition of Trade with China, 2000–22

1. Exports of Goods

Billions of US dollars

2. Imports of Goods

Billions of US dollars



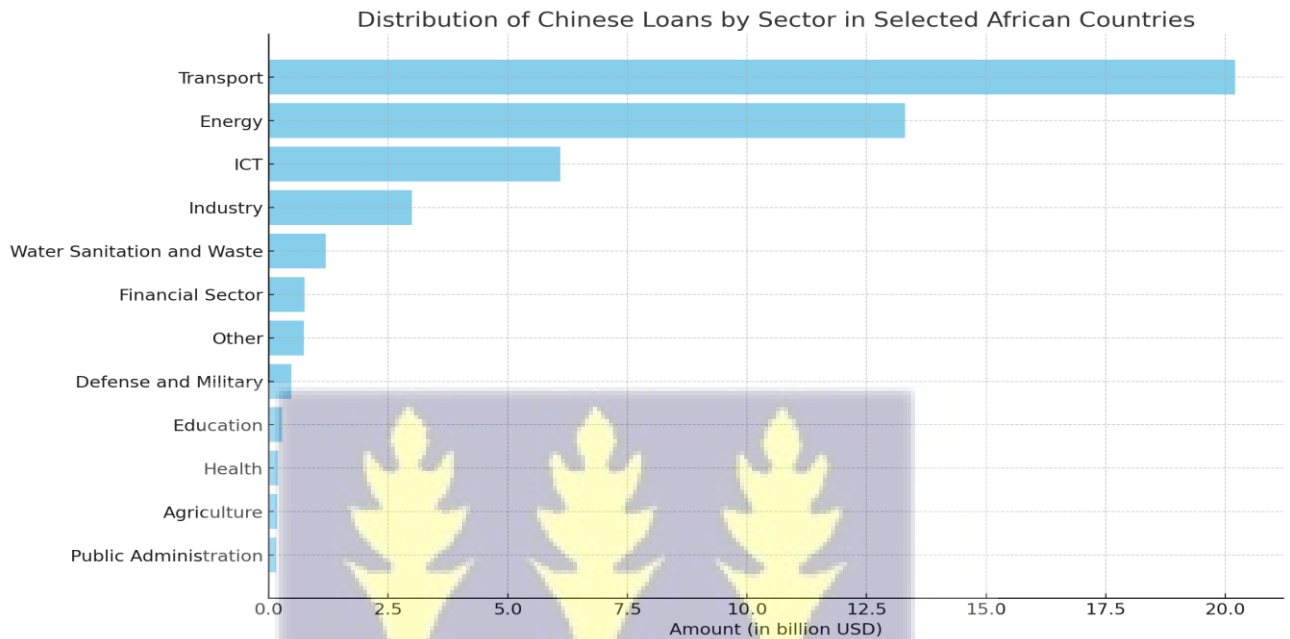
Source: Chen, W., Fornino, M., & Rawlings, H. (2024)

3.6.6 Loans and Debt: Implications for Africa

There is growing concern about rising African debts and the fear of debt unsustainability. Africa owes huge sums to China and other bilateral lenders as well as to the Paris Club of lenders and multilateral institutions including the IMF/World Bank among other private lenders. Data on Africa's total debt to China is difficult to find due to China's opaque conditionalities in its granting of loans and other economic agreements to African countries. This makes the availability and full understanding of China's lending to Africa difficult. However, Chen, W., Fornino, M., & Rawlings, H. (2024:9) argue that "data indicates that the debt owed to China is relatively minor within the broader spectrum of African debt" further noting that Africa's "total external interest payments attributable to China's official bilateral loans is 10 percent as of 2019". There has however been a significant decline in China's lending to Africa. Much of the loans African countries procure from China, the US, and other multilateral financial institutions go into investments in infrastructure, mining, and manufacturing amongst others. This investment, Bo, H., Lawal, R., & Sakariyahu, R. (2024) in their study revealed that it has significantly contributed to the improvement of lives, the creation of jobs and the attainment

of Sustainable Development Goal 3 which is human development. The chart below lends credence to the distribution of Chinese loans by sectors in Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Ethiopia and South Africa.

Figure 3.8 Distribution of Chinese Loans by Sector in Select African Countries



This bar chart illustrates the distribution of Chinese loans across various sectors in Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Ethiopia, and South Africa.

Source: Data collated from the Boston University Global Development Policy Centre

The data from this chart indicates that infrastructural development constitutes the greatest priority for the selected countries. It is the same across much of the continent. Collectively, transport and energy alone account for over half of all loans collected from China from 2000 to 2023 for these countries. It above all indicates that for these countries, their main priority in borrowing from China is to build the infrastructural base for the advancement of their economies. Thus, transportation and energy in the form of roads, railways, airports, and power generation among others are required to catalyze regional and continental connectivity, trade, and industrial growth. The data also implies that African countries spend hugely on Information

Communication Technology and industry. ICT is the backbone of a modern knowledge-based economy hence the huge amounts borrowed to invest in the growth of ICT. Industrial growth in manufacturing and productivity is also a major reason for the heavy borrowing of these selected countries. The sectoral picture from the data seems to buttress China's argument that it seeks to foster the development of Africa and not trap the continent in debts as mainly argued by the West. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is one important vehicle that seeks to connect African countries to that of Asia, parts of Europe and the Middle East.

From the point of hegemonic stability theory, this gives the picture of a rising hegemon – China – deploying its huge economic muscle to facilitate infrastructural connectivity, and economic and industrial growth within Africa while pursuing geopolitical interests in the continent.

Chen, W., Fornino, M., & Rawlings, H. (2024) noted that there has been a decline in Chinese lending to African countries, especially since 2021. They observed that “In the last 5 years, however, Chinese official total loan disbursements to African countries have fallen, representing in 2021 about one-eighth of their peak value of 1.2 percent of the region's GDP in 2016. Total loan commitments also contracted dramatically from their peak in 2016” Chen, W., Fornino, M., & Rawlings, H. (2024: 10). This might be due to growing concern about huge debts African leaders are taking on to develop their countries, growing concerns in China about debt defaults, and China's own slow economic growth fostered by internal structural challenges within China, and other economic challenges also brought on by the trade war with the US. This however bodes concern for many African countries. It implies that the easy money they had access to borrow would no longer be forthcoming, at least not that easily. This means these countries' attempts to modernize through huge infrastructural development will have to be scaled back. Other ongoing projects that relied on Chinese funding may not be that readily available. The stringent conditionalities associated with the IMF and World Bank funding make

it difficult for many African countries to easily access funds from these institutions to finance these projects.

Concerns about China taking over strategic African assets from their failure Chinese loans have been dispelled by Devermont, J. (2022) who noted that:

“According to Rhodium Group’s 2019 analysis of Chinese debt renegotiations, none of the 22 publicly disclosed instances of debt renegotiation with African nations resulted in asset seizures, with outcomes instead including refinancing, write-offs, deferments, and withholding of further lending. The Rhodium Group analysis also found the Hambantota port in Sri Lanka remains the only asset seizure related to Chinese infrastructure loans”.

China so far has not seized any asset from any African country due to its indebtedness. The concern however arises when China sees a particular asset in an African country of strategic value, will China not seize the asset then? The answer to the question is not readily available.

One major challenge with China-African relations as it pertains to loans is the huge discrepancy between the commitment and the disbursement. Data reveals that while China does promise much to African countries, its eventual disbursement is always below the expected amount. The chart below shows the discrepancy between the promised amounts and the disbursed amounts. What it indicates above all is that though there is always high commitments from China for the continent, eventual distribution always fall short of the expected commitments. African leaders thus largely turn to other sources to borrow to fund much of their gaping developmental challenges.

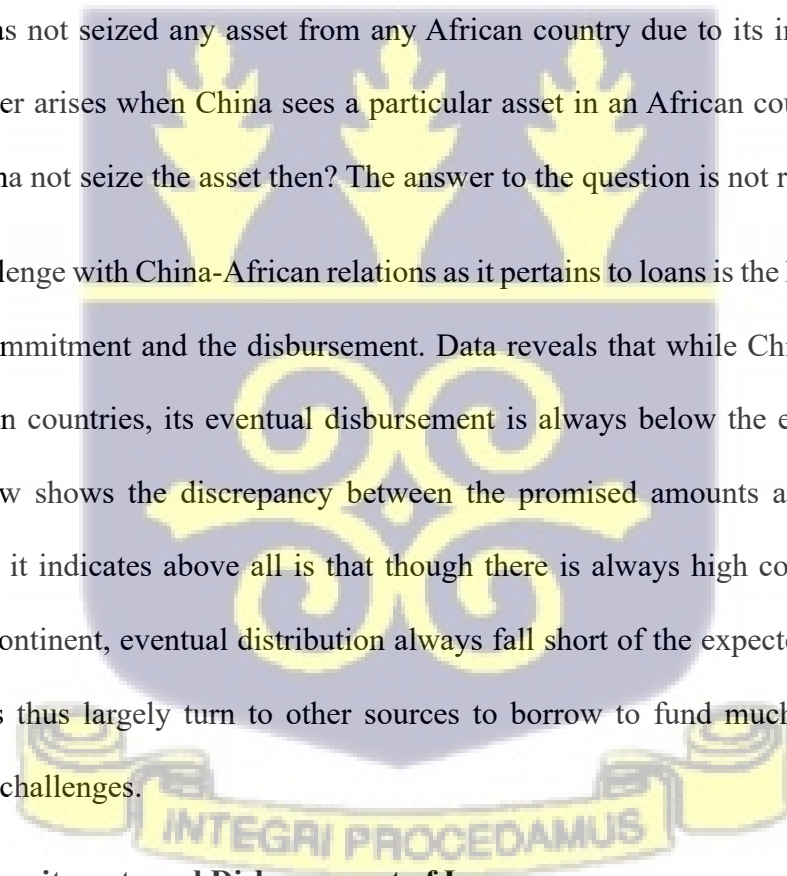
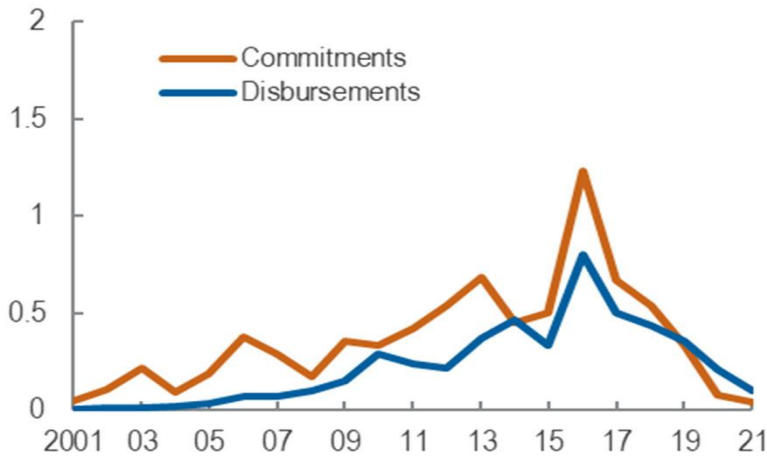


Figure 3.9 Commitments and Disbursement of Loans



Source: Chen, W., Fornino, M., & Rawlings, H. (2024)

3.6.7 Infrastructure

The US-China competition also has implications for African infrastructural development. Africa, though endowed with natural resources and a growing youthful population, the continent is marginal in global trade, accounting for just 2% of global economic activities Kiran (2021). A major reason for these marginal economic activities in global trade is largely due to the inability of the continent to diversify its economy relying solely on the exchange of natural extractives and also poor infrastructure World Bank (2017), Bo, H., Lawal, R., & Sakariyahu, R. (2024) and Owoeye T (2021). China again has considerable advantages over the US in Africa when it comes to infrastructure financing. In his testimony before the US Congress, Devermont, J. (2022) noted that:

“According to a 2019 estimate by the African Development Bank, Africa’s annual infrastructure needs are between \$130 billion and \$170 billion, but current funding falls short by between \$68 billion and \$108 billion per year.”

He further mentioned that:

“according to the Infrastructure Consortium for Africa, a data agency associated with the African Development Bank, China committed \$25.7 billion to African infrastructure projects

in 2018, while the United States committed \$297 million. According to Deloitte, between 2018 and 2019 China financed 20.4 percent and built 31 percent of construction projects in Africa. Over the same period, the United States and international development finance institutions together financed 10.2 percent of projects, and US companies constructed 2.9 percent of projects”.

A major place of dominance by the Chinese especially when it comes to infrastructure construction, financing and domination in Africa is the construction of ports. As noted by Devermont, J. (2022),

“According to 2019 study by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, 46 existing or planned port projects in sub-Saharan Africa are funded, built, or operated by Chinese enterprises. Of these 46 port projects, China has constructed 41 of the ports, has provided financing for 27, and has operational control of 11. One of these ports, the Port of Djibouti, is already a dual-use military-civil facility, and several other civilian ports have the potential for military use by the People Liberation Army (PLA)”.

The US is coming into the infrastructure investment in Africa though its share is still a fraction of what China invests in the continent. A notable area of investment for the US is what is dubbed the Lobito Corridor Project. This project seeks to connect three countries – the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, and Angola. These countries are all resource endowed and the DRC and Zambia abound in critical mineral resources like cobalt, copper, and uranium among others. The construction of the rail line connecting these countries will enable the US access to some of the resources hold China has over some of these countries. This might reduce the over-dependence on China as the main source of infrastructural investment in Africa. However, all the countries in question are saddled with heavy debts to China over their resources.

This confirms what Mr. Paul Frimpong of (ACCP) refers to as hardware and software when it comes to Chinese and American investments. Across Africa, China is noted for its physical projects and investments which are visible for everyone to see. America however is noted more for institutional and capacity building among others. For many Africans however, they hope for increased Chinese investments in infrastructure. To this end, most construction projects in Africa are also constructed by Chinese companies with few Western companies constructing projects in Africa.

3.7 Political Implications of the US-China Competition on Africa

China's number one condition for establishing any form of economic, political or diplomatic relationship with any country is contingent on the recognition of Taiwan as part of China and not an independent country on its own. This principle is non-negotiable. China's opening to America was possible due to the use of shrewd diplomatic language to describe the relationship between China and Taiwan. The US employs strategic ambiguity to describe its relationship with Taiwan and China. China's 'Going Global' was used as an opportunity to use its huge economic, political and diplomatic might to isolate Taiwan and break every form of diplomatic recognition the Island nation enjoys. To this end, China has succeeded in this quest. Of the fifty-four African countries presently, only one – the Kingdom of Swaziland – recognizes Taiwan as a sovereign state. All other countries recognize Taiwan as part of China.

This is important because it buttresses the view that China's heavy investment in Africa will imply that the continent may have no choice but to accept and accede to China's demands in the international system. China presently has territorial disputes with neighboring states over the South-China Sea. Many African nations will support China's position on this dispute, not because they believe China is necessarily right, but because China's demands must be acceded

to, if not the huge Chinese market can be shut in one's face with a cataclysmic impact on the economy.

3.7.1 Multilateral, Regional and Sub-regional Fora Influence

The US-China competition will also have implications for African votes in multilateral settings especially in the United Nations (UN). African countries are likely to vote in support of China's position on certain key bills. This is because China has invested so much in African countries and given out so many loans in Africa that it simply makes sense to support its position on certain key issues. China through other multilateral fora such as the Forum on China and Africa Cooperation, vaunted Belt and Road Initiative (BRI),

Devermont, J. (2022) noted *“according to a May 2020 report by the Heritage Foundation, the risk of Chinese government surveillance extends far beyond the AU headquarters, as China has built at least 186 governmental buildings in Africa, constructed 14 intragovernmental telecommunication networks, and donated computer equipment to at least 35 African governments”*.

China also has a huge impact on regional bodies. In 2012, China constructed and freely donated the African Union headquarters building to Africa for \$200 million as a show of friendship. Construction was handled by Chinese companies with Chinese telecommunications company Huawei providing connectivity. The French newspaper Le Monde later reported how China planted bugs in the building and was able to monitor proceedings for up to five years.

What this implies politically is that intelligence gathering within the continent by the two superpowers will increase in the coming years. America also has extensive intelligence operations across Africa. The impact on political leaders will be huge as the privacy of some may be breached unless they invest in sophisticated IT solutions.

3.7.2 US Attempts to Isolate China? NO

Another political implication of the US-China competition is that Africa as a continent will make it difficult if not impossible for the US to isolate China within the global system. Despite the heavily integrated into the global economic system and the main trade partner of two-thirds of the globe, the US-China competition was premised on the supposition that America could isolate China and hobble its rapid advancement within the global system. This study, however, argues that this will not be possible within the current global system. Like a flower in its bloom, all African countries and leaders in much of the Global South will simply court Chinese investment and trade thus nullifying the isolation attempts. This is because of several factors: first is the sheer number of countries in the continent: fifty-four independent countries, the abundance of natural resources, the youthful population, the threat of security, immigration, and to stem ideological spread among others. African votes will matter in multilateral settings, especially in the UN on China's expanding geopolitical ambitions. China and Russia have both expressed concerns about the present setup of some aspects of the international systems and expressed the need for change. China will need support, votes and validation. African support will neutralize Washington isolation agenda as its regularly wielded. For instance, when Russia was sanctioned and isolated following the invasion of Ukraine, an African Union delegation led by the Senegalese president visited him and discussed with him the challenges African countries presently faced as a result of the conflict and what might be required to address it. Many African leaders including Zimbabwe among others have subsequently met the Russian leader. Any attempt by the US to isolate China will thus fail because the Chinese leader will still have many countries across the continent going to see him on regular bases. A good example of this is the US attempt to ban the Chinese telecommunication giant Huawei. The company was driven out of Western markets but was warmly received in countries across the Global South. Today, Huawei provides telephone infrastructure to many countries in the

continent. It is expanding and its Harmony operating system is being deployed in Africa and other countries in the Global South.

3.7.3 The US-China Information War and Africa

The US-China competition also has implications for Africa, especially its youth. A noted aspect of the competition is in the information space, where there is the belief that social media is a major means of influencing the perception of and mindset of the youth, and as a result, both the US and China have taken turns to weaponize social media or to ban it as a means to contain its influence on the population of their country. To this end, whoever wins the information war wins over the minds of the continent. However, unfortunately, African governments do not have control over this aspect of their relations with the superpowers. The US and China are dueling over the fate of the social media sensation TikTok. America attempted to ban it or have it sold to an American company which China opposes. This is because of the sheer amount of time American youth spend on the app and concerns about data. China can easily influence young children through the app. Videos and information about the Tiananmen massacre among other banned conversations in China are not found on the app. However, Chinese-approved discourse and videos have algorithms that easily generate those. China has also banned almost all-American social media and search engines due to its fears of US infiltration and influence. Chinese citizens have access to media feeds by Chinese-approved social media while the US also has the same for its citizens. Africa however unfortunately do not have any social media platform for African youth to feed on. The continent relies on the already-established behemoths of Facebook, X, TikTok etc. These platforms have insidious means of passing information to the youth of the continent. The competition may eventually heat up and become dominant within the information realm, and whoever controls that realm will determine who gains access to African hearts and minds.

3.7.4 The US-China Influence on Governance in Africa

America's main concern about China's growing interface with African countries is the fear that China is set to export its authoritarian one-party model of governance to the continent. This it is feared will have concerns for the decline of democracies in the continent and the rise of an authoritarian system of government. America is concerned that China seeks to change the present international order to suit its interests. When asked if the US-China competition will affect governance in the continent, Prof. Seidu Alidu of the Department of Political Science at the University of Ghana noted that:

“Yes and No. No in the sense that it will give governments that are smart, choices, and make smart choices, like the way Nkrumah did. Nkrumah worked with both the East and the West to the advantage of the country. So, a smart government will be able to take advantage of the competitiveness because each one will want to have you. If you are in a strategic country, you should be able to take advantage of the competition to advance your country, like the way Vietnam is doing. That is good. It may also pose a challenge if you are not smart enough and they think that you are completely aligning, and they can undermine you. Why? One of the ways they can undermine you is to withhold aid, withhold the sharing of intelligence, they can even slap sanctions on you, or even overthrow your government like the way they did to Nkrumah. When it was very clear that the US was losing Nkrumah to the East, to Russia, the CIA instigated and worked with people to overthrow him. It is a historical record. So that's the danger; that if you're not smart enough, and you have what they need, and you are not aligning with them, they can instigate mass protest or revolution in your country and ride on the back of it and get people to overthrow you. Apart from overthrowing you, the West also tends to create instability in your country, and that allows them to exploit your natural resources and pay less to you, like the way they have done in DRC. Stability in DRC means countries will pay more to the state, but if there is chaos, the looters have their way”.

Mr. Paul Frimpong of (ACCPA) on the same issue said:

“from what we see, China practices non-interference in the internal affairs of each country and that has been their policy all these decades, and I think they are still going by it. Obviously, again, it is not in anybody’s position to tell African countries the path they are supposed to take. In many ways, we have been preached on the kind of political systems we have on the continent and the alternative that we see practiced by China has yielded results. So it is up to African countries to chart their own political paths, ones that we believe can unlock the continent’s potential not what US or China practices. We need to chart our own political journey and choose the way that we believe that can get us to develop and not what China or the US practices”.

3.8 Challenges and Opportunities for Africa from the Competition

The US-China competition presents both challenges and opportunities for the continent. This was acknowledged by my respondents.

Ambassador Mohammed Imoro of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration when asked about opportunities and challenges the competition presents to the continent, discussed two opportunities. He said:

“the only opportunity I see is that as the rivalry is growing, then definitely both sides will be trying to court or to kind of pull along those of us in Africa or the African countries, the weaker states in the international system. So if you position yourself well, as a weaker state, as a country belonging to the industrial south, you may get benefits from both of them. Because as they try to court or pull you along, they will try to induce you, and at the end of the day you will get economic opportunities like some debt cancelations, some inflows, some investments, even though you don’t subscribe to what they are trying to pull you from. So at the end of the day you may get something from them but you may not be with them. That’s the typical

advantage you can get from the competition. The other advantage that I foresee is that you know Africa is seen as a place in this current century that everybody is struggling to get involve and the reason being that opportunities in the other parts of the continent have been tapped, or have been... I don't want to call it exhausted, but at least they have exploited their opportunities, but Africa still has some opportunities so now all the continents are trying to have a major role in Africa so as the Americans or the Westerners were already in Africa, the Chinese and the Russians feel that they have to also create space for themselves within Africa. So, with this kind of rivalry that is going on, if America was kind of dealing with us in their own terms, they will now feel that there is the need for them to now treat us in equal footing, so that we don't swing our allegiance to the Chinese and the Russians and the vice versa. They may also think that if they are getting into Africa, the best way for them is to present themselves as partners who are coming from an equal footing so that we can get space that they are trying to create. That will look like a better partnership than the partnership we have with the West".

On challenges however, he said "when it comes to International Relations, it is all about national interest. So even though they are entangled in that rivalry, they also recognized that the weaker states like Ghana, while we are relating with both sides, they are concerned about their national interests. So, if you don't do anything on towards that hurt any of the two major rivals, it will not affect you in any way. You will keep your relationship with them".

Prof. Seidu Alidu also weighed in on the same issue saying that US-China competition has mainly reduced the weaponization of international trade and the tendency to isolate and sanction countries that the US disagrees with on issues of governance. Many such African countries now have an option to turn to – China. These countries can trade with China and have Chinese investment, and Chinese companies can build their infrastructure. African countries with smart leadership can also capitalize on this competition to advance their country's interests. He contends that countries like Vietnam, and Malaysia among others with smart

leadership have been able to use the US-China competition to attract investments from both countries. American attempts to off-shore and friend-shore supply chains have led to some American companies moving manufacturing plants to countries such as Vietnam, Malaysia, and India among others. African countries if they create an enabling environment can attract some of these companies, with the right environment and with skilled labour.

On challenges for Africa, Prof. Alidu noted that African leaders should be wary because;

“such competitiveness could lead to the superpowers employing coercive means to make sure that we stick with them, or we trade with them, or we become their allies. Once it is moved beyond that element of using the right approach to coercive approaches, then we are in trouble. Two, we should also be concerned because if care is not taken, we are likely to see an economic Cold War visited on us with consequences. This may imply economic proxy wars, the use of multinational companies of these states to undermine or even overthrow governments that may not support their interests. And the third concern has to do with the infrastructure for resources, where if you are unable to pay back, they takeover very strategic assets of the state to repay that could be another concern”.

3.9 Intervention measures the continent can adopt to protect itself from the negative impact of this competition

Africa as a continent cannot disentangle itself from the global economy, however, the continent must put in place guardrails to ensure it does not become subservient to the whims and caprices of these two hegemons. A clear path to this is to foster stronger continental integration and trade. Ambassador Mohammed Imoro noted that for Ghana, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is the game changer. He admitted that intra-regional trade within the continent is too low. Secondary data buttresses his view. According to Songwe, V. (2019), “The share of intra-African exports as a percentage of total African exports has increased from about 10

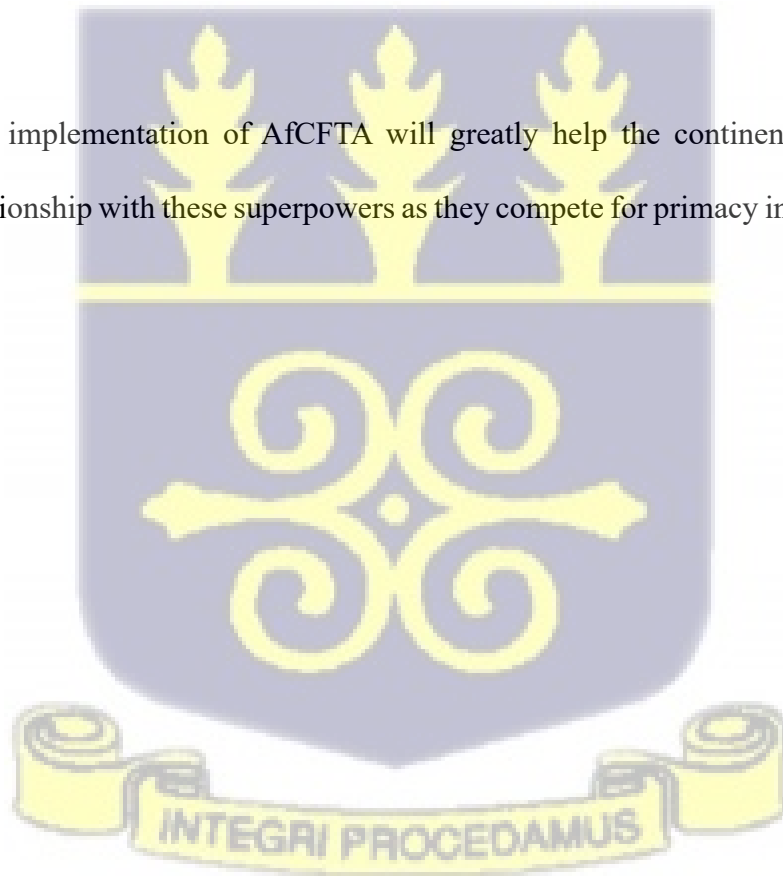
percent in 1995 to around 17 percent in 2017, but it remains low compared to levels in Europe (69 percent), Asia (59 percent), and North America (31 percent). This is an important reason to expect that trade will be a key driver of growth in Africa”. This is further buttressed by Ogbodo Stephen, O. (2024) who noted that *“For example, only 6% of Africa’s total exports of about 75% were absorbed regionally in 2011. Unlike other regions, intra-African trade between 2015 and 2017 was put at 15.2%. This compares poorly with Asia’s 61%, Europe’s 67%, and North America’s 47% [9]. Intra-African exports account for only 12% of Nigeria’s total exports and 4% of total imports. With minimal participation in the global value chain and a preponderance of natural resources in its export basket, Africa accounts for less than 3 percent of world trade [11]. Worst still, a reasonable proportion of goods sold in Africa at present originate from countries outside the continent”*.

Ambassador Imoro noted that Ghana lobbied to bring the Headquarters of the AfCFTA to Ghana as a sign of the country’s commitment to the principles of continental trade and integration. He noted that the whole idea of continental integration and trade was the brainchild of the country’s first President, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, who could not bring it to fruition because of differences with other continental leaders, but as it stands now, everyone understands that the safest way to keep the country from the vagaries of geopolitical competition is to ensure continental self-sufficiency.

The Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) seeks to neutralize the challenges raised by Ogbodo Stephen (2024) that “regarding global economic competition, Africa ranks near the bottom. This is because the continent is held back by fragmented markets that inhibit efficiency, constrain economic growth, and undermine integration [6]. Intra-Africa trade has long been constrained by obsolete borders, transport infrastructure, and numerous uncoordinated regulations across dozens of markets. Governments have often erected trade barriers to defend their markets from sub-regional and regional competitions, making it more expensive for

countries to trade with near neighbours than countries much farther afield”. AfCFTA, launched in March 2018 seeks to establish a market of 1.3 billion people with GDP of well over \$3 trillion. Songwe V (2019) noted that “According to modelling results by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the AfCFTA is projected to increase the value of intra-African exports. AfCFTA will be a game changer for stimulating intra-African trade. It is projected, through the sole removal of tariffs on goods, to increase the value of intra-African trade by between 15 percent (or \$50 billion) and 25 percent (or \$70 billion), depending on liberalization efforts, in 2040, compared to a situation with no AfCFTA in place. Alternatively, the share of intra-African trade would increase by nearly 40 percent to over 50 percent, depending on the ambition of the liberalization, between the start of the implementation of the reform (2020) and 2040”.

The successful implementation of AfCFTA will greatly help the continent to successfully manage its relationship with these superpowers as they compete for primacy in the international system.



CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the main findings of the research based on the objectives of the study that were clearly stated in the first chapter, some of the conclusions drawn from the findings, and some recommendations to address some of the issues raised in the study. The chapter is made of three sections where each section deals with above issues outlined.

4.2 Summary of Findings

Main Findings

1. Economic Implications:

Trade Opportunities: Africa stands to benefit economically from the US-China competition through increased trade with both the US and China. The continent therefore could leverage the competition to attract investments and diversify trade partnerships. Data from the study supports the argument that trade with both superpowers has been on the increase, especially since 2016. The study also revealed that increased trade opportunities can however be sustained by investing in the appropriate infrastructure network, ensuring the development of a skilled labour force, offering competitive taxes to businesses, and developing the appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks to support businesses among others. This is presently the case with some Southeast Asian countries including Vietnam, Malaysia, and Thailand among others. These countries are emerging as net beneficiaries of the US-China competition. Following America's policies of friend-shoring and offshoring and Europe's policy of derisking – both

aimed at diversifying global supply chains from China – many multinational corporations and investors relocated some of their operations to these countries to avoid getting sanctioned by either the US or China. Africa can also leverage the competition to attract investments as foreign multinational companies are increasingly looking for other destinations aside China to keep them from getting sanctioned by either government.

Divergent Trade Patterns: China-Africa vs. US-Africa: Another key economic finding from the study is the divergent trajectories of economic engagements with both China and the United States. The study revealed that China-African trade has significantly increased and keeps growing yearly while US-Africa trade which cratered to an all-time low has only started to rebound following the start of the trade war. The study attributes the growth in China-African trade to economic complementarities between the continent and China. This is because China's economy is still growing and thus has sustained demand for natural resources to keep its manufacturing sector growing. To this end, Africa exports large amounts of unprocessed natural resources including oil to China while importing manufactured and finished goods from China.

In contrast, US-Africa trade is low because the American economy is mature and technologically advanced and thus has fewer economic complementarities with Africa. Advances in shale technology have powered the US to become the leader in global oil production and hence reduced its importation of African oil. The same is true for much of Africa's other natural exports. Africa's nascent manufacturing sector therefore hinders its trade relations with the US and China. Moreover, many US industries that could have imported African natural resources have relocated production to China and other Asian countries to take advantage of the low taxes, low labour costs, and business regulation among other incentives. These factors largely drive the growing divergence in trade between Africa, the US and China. To take advantage of the huge US market, African countries must invest in industrialization.

Strategic Minerals and the US-China Competition: Africa's Emerging Role in the Global

Transition to Clean Energy and Electric Vehicles: The study also found that the US-China competition places Africa in a strategic position to play a crucial role in the emerging contest for clean energy technologies and electric vehicles (EVs). African countries endowed with huge deposits of mineral resources such as lithium, cobalt, copper, iron, nickel, and other strategic minerals will attract significant attention from both the US and China as they compete for access to these resources which are indispensable in the quest for clean energy technologies and the advancement of their geopolitical and economic goals. In this context, countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Ghana among other African countries are expected to emerge as key actors.

Infrastructural Development: The study also found that US-China competition will advance Africa's effort to improve its infrastructural connectivity as the superpowers both seek to court African allies. It was however established from the study that China leads in financing and constructing infrastructure across Africa, while the US focuses more on institutional support. This implies that African governments will need support from both superpowers. Concerns are also quietly being raised about Africa's growing huge debts to China as it strives to improve its infrastructure connectivity. China primarily finances and constructs many African infrastructural projects. There however has not been any evidence that China can use the huge debts owed by African countries to seize strategic infrastructure projects in the continent.

2. Political Implications

The Emergence of Bloc Politics and African Neutral Position: The study reveals that African leaders, civil society organizations, and policymakers are keenly following the US-China competition. However, they largely seek to avoid taking sides or becoming entangled in

this geopolitical rivalry. For many, the competition is perceived as a re-emergence of bloc politics and the strive for national interests and global hegemonic status between two principal blocs, with the West led by the US and its allies and the East led by China and Russia.

However, African leaders are challenged with a different set of problems when it comes to addressing the pressing demands of a rapidly growing youthful population that seeks better employment opportunities, access to quality education and healthcare, and a higher standard of living. Recent public demonstrations in countries such as Nigeria and Kenya underscore the urgency of these socioeconomic issues.

In this context, for many African leaders, their main priority is securing investments that can drive the continent's development and provide jobs and improved standard of living for their citizenry. For continental leaders, these dreams can only be realized by taking a neutral position on the contest between the US and China rather than aligning with a specific country. A cardinal foreign policy principle for many of these countries has been non-alignment in global politics and thus many seek to adhere strictly to this policy. Their focus remains on fostering growth and improving livelihoods rather than aligning with one of the competing global powers vying for geopolitical dominance.

Governance and US-China Competition: The Resilience of African Governance Models:

The study found that contrary to American fears of China exporting its One-Party governance model to Africa thus fostering democratic regression in the continent, the US-China competition is unlikely to have a significant direct impact on governance systems across the African continent. For many African citizens, democratic governance – characterized by freedom of expression, free and fair elections, respect for human rights, an independent press and judiciary – remains a priority.

Furthermore, there is little evidence to suggest that China actively seeks to export its governance model to Africa. China's policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of its partner countries means that it typically refrains from influencing domestic political systems, provided its commercial interests remain secure.

China's dominance in African trade can be attributed in part to its adaptability. China maintains cooperative relationships with a wide spectrum of governance systems ranging from authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes to democratic governments. In contrast, the United States' more rigid foreign policy approach limits its ability to engage with certain African governments, reducing its flexibility in navigating the continent's diverse political landscape.

The Taiwan Question and African Diplomatic Alignment: The study further reveals that many African countries acceded to China's cardinal principle of the recognition of a One-China policy by severing diplomatic ties with Taiwan to maintain a cooperative and productive relationship with China. There is only one African country – Eswatini – that presently maintains diplomatic relations with Taiwan. All other African countries recognized the One-China policy. There are concerns among some African policymakers that China can wield its huge market as a weapon against a country if any country goes against China's core interests.

3. Challenges and Opportunities

The study also established that the US-China competition presents both opportunities and challenges for the African continent. On one hand, Africa now benefits from having multiple formidable partners for infrastructural investments and financial assistance, no longer relying solely on the United States as in the past. This diversification of partnerships enhances the continent's bargaining power and access to resources for development.

On the other hand, concerns have been raised among African leaders regarding the potential escalation of this competition. There is apprehension that the intensification of rivalry between the two superpowers could lead to covert operations, economic sanctions, or other forms of punitive measures targeting states perceived as unsupportive of either power. Furthermore, such developments could transform Africa into a hub for intelligence operations between the United States and China, potentially undermining stability and peace across the continent.

4.3 Conclusions

The study concludes that the US-China competition presents both significant opportunities and challenges for Africa, positioning the continent at the centre of a global power struggle with far-reaching economic and political implications. Economically, the rivalry has increased trade and investment flows, particularly from China, which has become Africa's largest trading partner and a key player in Africa's infrastructure development. However, this engagement has also exposed Africa to a few challenges including, trade imbalances, debt vulnerabilities, and over-reliance on raw material exports. Politically, the competition has reignited bloc dynamics reminiscent of the Cold War, compelling African leaders to navigate the rivalry with caution, often adopting a posture of strategic neutrality.

The study underscores the need for Africa to leverage its position in the global system effectively, capitalizing on the competition to secure beneficial partnerships, foster economic growth, and enhance regional integration. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) offers a critical mechanism to reduce dependency on external powers and stimulate intra-continental trade. Additionally, improving governance, promoting transparency in financial agreements, and prioritizing value addition to natural resources are essential steps toward mitigating risks and enhancing economic resilience.

While the rivalry between the US and China poses challenges, it also provides Africa with a unique opportunity to assert its agency in global affairs. By strategically engaging both superpowers and diversifying its partnerships, Africa can transform this competition into a driver for sustainable development, reducing dependency and promoting a more balanced and autonomous growth trajectory. The findings affirm the potential of African nations to navigate this complex geopolitical landscape, provided they adopt unified, strategic, and forward-looking policies.

4.4 Recommendations

The research recommendations are broadly classified into two: policy and practice. The first two recommendations fall under the policy category, while the next three recommendations fall under the practice category.

Policy Recommendations

1. Strengthen Regional Integration:

The study recommends that African leaders give strong commitment and support to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The full implementation of this program will greatly improve continental trade, boost resource mobilization, create jobs, and reduce the huge dependence on external donors and support. To this end, the study recommends for the removal of all impediments and bottlenecks such as inadequate infrastructure, non-tariff barriers, and distrust and corruption among others that seek to affect the full roll-out of the program.

The study also recommends continental leaders to prioritize educating and training the youth in the acquisition of various technical skills. Industries are attracted to places where there is a certainty of low-cost skilled labour. Presently, Southeast Asian countries are attracting many

industries moving from China due to the combination of attractive investment climate and skilled labour.

The study also recommends that continental leaders invest in value addition when it comes to their mineral wealth – thus the processing of their natural resources within the continent – for export, since without value addition, the export of only raw extractives will simply perpetuate the cycle of poverty and unemployment that is currently pervasive in the continent. Negotiating investment in the natural resource wealth of the country with any investor must include the establishment of processing plants within the country.

2. Strategic Non-Alignment: Articulating Africa's Developmental Priorities Amid US-China Competition:

The study recommends that African leaders clearly define and communicate their priorities to both the United States and China in the context of the ongoing great power competition. The continent's approach should emphasize engagement rather than alignment, seeking partnerships and investments that support Africa's developmental objectives without becoming entangled in the geopolitical rivalry. Through the African Union and other global platforms, African leaders should explicitly articulate the continent's position as one that prioritizes development-focused partnerships. The current lack of a unified and assertive stance stands in contrast to the approach adopted by Southeast Asian leaders. Leaders in Southeast Asia have effectively utilized the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as a platform to articulate their non-alignment position in the US-China competition and have further reinforced their stance through influential articles published in respected journals in both China and the United States. Africa, by comparison, has yet to adopt a similar strategy for clearly and forcefully expressing its collective position on the matter.

Practice Recommendation

3. Diversify Partnerships:

The study also recommends that Africa must as a matter of urgency seek engagements beyond the US and China to include other global partners. This will ensure Africa can negotiate from a position of strength. There are middle and other rising powers in the international system including India, Brazil, and Turkey among others. These are partners Africa must engage to diversify from the US-China duopoly. It will also give the continent a voice within the international system.

4. Build Economic Resilience:

The study further recommends that Africa must strive to build economic resilience through value addition to natural resources, reduce raw material exports, and develop local manufacturing industries to address trade imbalances. This will also enable the continent take advantage of the full opportunities the US and Chinese markets offer.

5. Promote Good Governance:

Finally, the study recommends that Africa strengthen its democratic institutions and governance structures to reduce vulnerability to external political interference. This can be done by maintaining the independence of democratic institutions and holding elected accountable.

It is the conviction of the researcher that these among others if carefully adhered to will greatly enable the continent to prepare fully as the continent prepares for this evolving competition between the US and China.

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UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON

LEGON CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND DIPLOMACY (LECIAD)

QUESTIONNAIRE: The US-China Competition and Its Implications on Africa's Economic and Political Landscape

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. Name (Optional):
2. Age:
3. Country of Residence:
4. Occupation:
5. Educational Background:

Section 2: Awareness and Perception

6. **How familiar are you with the concept of US-China competition?**
 - Very familiar
 - Somewhat familiar
 - Not familiar at all
7. **In your opinion, how significant is the US-China competition for African countries?**
 - Very significant
 - Somewhat significant
 - Not significant



8. **What aspects of US-China competition are you most aware of? (Select all that apply)**

- Trade relations
- Political influence
- Military presence
- Technological advancements
- Investment strategies

Section 3: Economic Implications

9. **How has US-China competition influenced economic policies in your Ghana?**

- Strongly influenced
- Somewhat influenced
- Not influenced

10. **What economic opportunities do you see arising from US-China competition for Africa? (Select all that apply)**

- Increased foreign direct investment (FDI)
- Infrastructure development
- Trade agreements
- Job creation
- Technological transfer



11. What are the potential economic risks associated with US-China competition for Africa? (Select all that apply)

- Debt dependency
- Economic inequality
- Trade imbalances
- Loss of local businesses

Section 4: Political Implications

12. How has US-China competition affected political relationships within African nations?

- Strengthened relationships
- Weakened relationships
- No significant impact

13. Do you believe that US-China competition affects governance and political stability in Africa?

- Yes, positively
- Yes, negatively
- No impact

14. What role do you think African governments should play in navigating US-China competition? (Select all that apply)

- Mediating relationships
- Diversifying partnerships

- Strengthening regional cooperation
- Promoting national interests

Section 5: Future Outlook

15. **How do you foresee the future of US-China competition affecting Africa in the next 5-10 years?**

- Positive impact
- Negative impact
- Neutral impact

16. **What strategies should African nations adopt to maximize benefits from US-China competition? (Open-ended)**

17. **Trade:** Has the US-China competition affected trade patterns between Africa and the United States or China? If so, how? **(Open-ended)**

18. **Investment:** Have you observed any changes in foreign direct investment (FDI) flows to Africa from the United States or China due to their competition? **(Open-ended)**

19. **Infrastructure:** How has the competition between the United States and China influenced infrastructure development in Africa? **(Open-ended)**

20. **Debt:** Are there any concerns about Africa's debt burden arising from the competition between the United States and China?

21. **Any additional comments or insights regarding US-China competition and its impact on Africa? (Open-ended)**

Section 6: Consent

18. Do you consent to the use of your responses for research purposes?

- Yes
- No

Instructions for Respondents:

- Please answer all questions honestly and to the best of your ability.
- Your responses will remain confidential and will only be used for academic purposes.



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- Diversifying partnerships

- Strengthening regional cooperation
- Promoting national interests

Section 5: Future Outlook

22. How do you foresee the future of US-China competition affecting Africa in the next 5-10 years?

- Positive impact
- Negative impact
- Neutral impact

23. What strategies should African nations adopt to maximize benefits from US-China competition? (Open-ended)

24. Trade: Has the US-China competition affected trade patterns between Africa and the United States or China? If so, how? **(Open-ended)**

25. Investment: Have you observed any changes in foreign direct investment (FDI) flows to Africa from the United States or China due to their competition? **(Open-ended)**

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