THE DECLINING HEGEMONY OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE GROWING INFLUENCE OF CHINA: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON POWER TRANSITION THEORY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Nasa’i Muhammad Gwadabe¹
Mohd Afandi Salleh²
Abdullahi Ayoade Ahmad³

Introduction

“Let China sleep; when she wakes, she will shake the world.”
- Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821)

Can China rise peacefully under the hegemony of the United States? The dominant answers to this question are hinged on the premise of the Power Transition theory. Most Power Transition theorists predicted that the rise of China would be conflictual. Some 200 years ago, Napoleon Bonaparte warned that the world should “let China sleep; when she wakes, she will shake the world”. Since today’s world is dominated by the hegemony of the United States, shaking the world means shaking the United States (Allison 2017, Chan, Hu and He 2018, Kugler and Organski 1989, Wang 2018, Yoder 2019).

According to the Theory, a transition of power from a hegemon to a rising power usually ends up in conflicts or war; and possibly a change in

The structure of the international system (Kugler and Organski 1989). The Power Transition theory was propounded by Abramo Fimo Kenneth Organski in his book World Politics in 1958. He explained that nations pass through three stages of power transition. First is the Stage of Potential Power, followed by the Stage of Transitional Growth in Power, and lastly the Stage of Power Maturity. Organski (1958) further explained that the key indicators of the relative power of a nation are the Size its Population, Industrial-strength, and Political Organisation.

Moreover, Organski argued that when a rising power threatens to displace a ruling power, the scenario usually ends up in a dangerous dynamic which the Harvard scholar Graham Allison called “Thucydides’ Trap” (Mastro 2019). Using our knowledge of history, we will understand the core assumption of the Power Transition theory as history has recorded several instances where transition of power led to major wars. In ancient time, the transition of power from Sparta to Athens was bloody. In the 20th century, the rising power of Germany in Europe resulted in world wars (Mearsheimer 2001).

Furthermore, the Power Transition theory explained that the factors that cause war between the declining hegemon and the rising power are dissatisfaction and fear. Ideally, in an anarchic global system of self-help, when a growing power is dissatisfied with the existing world order, naturally, the emerging power will endeavour to exalt its influence on the system to achieve its interest. Thus, the action of the revisionist state will correlatively cast fear and uncertainty in the mind of the declining hegemon which makes hegemonic war almost inevitable as testified by history. Usually, in the process of Power Transition, the dissatisfied challenger grows faster than the dominant nation and threatened to catch up and overtake the dominant power. As the power parity is narrowing between the challenger and the dominant nation, tension between the two major contenders would mount due to the uncertainty about the future intentions of the rising state which usually leads to confrontation (Chan et al. 2018).

Lastly, this paper used explanatory research design to critically evaluate the phenomenon under study and suggest possible solutions using process tracing. Process tracing is a tool of qualitative analysis that systematically provides an examination of evidence selected and analysed in light of research objectives (Beach 2017). In this paper, the data was principally gathered from secondary sources which included reports, official web sites, reputable journal articles, encyclopaedias and books. The collected information was critically analysed to explain how deficient Power Transition theory is in the 21st century to explain the current United States-China relations and the prospect
of peace or war between the two states.

The Issue and Rationale for the Study

Since the formulation of the Power Transition Theory in 1958, it has been widely used to analyse and make predictions about the behaviour of China when it reaches the stage of power maturity and the possible reaction of the hegemon of the day during the transition. Organski himself predicted that “the rise of China, which has just entered the stage of transitional growth, promises to be equally spectacular” (Organski 1958). Studies by the United States’ Central Intelligence Agency and others have projected that China will be a first-rate military power and will rival the United States in global power by 2020 (Layne 2008). Many argued that the rise of China and the fear and uncertainty that it will instil in the United States would eventually lead to a hegemonic war (Chan et al. 2018; Wang 2018; Yoder 2019).

The belief by many academics that the United States and China will end up in a Thucydides’ Trap, coupled with propaganda by the media of mass communication have helped in amplifying the issue beyond unreasonable level. The aggravation of the matter has instilled panic in the mind of foreign policymakers which could influence them to make erroneous and irrational policy choices that can jeopardise world peace and international cooperation.

Therefore, this paper argues that in terms of economic growth, China could surpass the United States, but there is no indication of armed confrontation between the two nations. This is because in the 21st century there are changing trends in international relations and global politics. There is increasing economic interdependence, rapid advancement in military technology, institutional constraints, domestic political system, nature of alliances and the issue of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) due to the advent and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. These factors have necessitated a critical revisit of the Power Transition theory which was propounded in mid-20th century.

Thus, this paper attempted examine the Power Transition Theory in relations to some emerging variables in the 21st century to address the knowledge vacuums on the prospects of peace or war between the United States and China should transition occur. The issues raised and discussed in this paper could be of importance to foreign policymakers and will help to tilt the attention of academics and the mass media to an angle of the phenomenon that has not been explored adequately.
Literature review

According to Organski (1958), the apex level a country can reach on the power transition spectrum is the “Stage of Power Maturity”. He explained that when a country becomes the dominant player on the international stage or ascends to the global hegemonic position, it eventually gets challenged by a rising and dissatisfied powerful nation. As proven by history, in most instances, the quest for world leadership between the declining hegemon and the emerging power usually lead to armed confrontation (Dunn 2010, Lopez and Johnson 2017).

For instance, in *World Politics: Trend and Transformation*, Shannon Lindsey Blanton and Charles William Kegley explained that the quest for world leadership among great power had been part of global politics since time immemorial. And they argued that rivalry between great powers is cyclical; meaning that history will be repeating itself (Blanton and Kegley 2017). The authors tried to justify the reoccurrence of great powers rivalry for world leadership by taking us back more than 500 years (1495 - 2025) into history using Long-cycle theory to show how global leadership manifests through some series of stages. According to them, periods of global war are followed by period of relative stability in global leadership which facilitate the creation of institutions and establishing of new international order by the hegemon with the support of other powerful nations. Usually, the global transformation alters states’ relative power, changes their alliances with other countries and probably with changes in international borders (Holsti 2019; Scott 2018). Table 1 below summarised some historic and probable future power transition trends.
Narrowing down the review to the rise of China under the global leadership of the United States which is the issue being examined by this paper, Graham Allison in his book entitled *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides’ Trap?* argued that China’s rise could not be peaceful (Allison 2017). Ideally, since China is a communist and non-democratic country while the United States is a capitalist and democratic nation, China should be dissatisfied with the current international order established by the United States after the Second World War.

As a rising power, China is to be dissatisfied with current American led global order. Naturally, the Chinese will attempt to reshape it. This dissatisfaction of the status quo by China will most likely create fear and uncertainty in the United States. This complex situation might lead to a tragic 21st century if it is not managed cautiously. The Harvard Professor Graham
Allison described the scenario to be a Thucydides’ Trap, which is a fatal configuration of structural distress that manifests when a powerful emerging country challenges the leadership of the hegemon (Allison 2017). Other researchers such as Ganguly & Pardesi (2012); Kim & Gates (2015); Kirshner (2019); Marsh (2014); Scott (2018) share similar position. Yet, Allison (2017) emphasised that armed confrontation could be avoided if both the United States and China take some difficult and painful steps towards a peaceful transition.

Recently, Chi-Hung Kwa, in his article *The China-US Trade War: Deep-Rooted Causes, Shifting Focus and Uncertain Prospects* explored the current upsurge of trade war waged against China by the United States. As believed by Power Transition theorists, the United States sees the speedy rise of China as a threat to her global dominance and leverage (Kwan 2019). Consequently, the United States has placed exorbitant tariffs on products coming from China. Also, the United States placed some restrictions on the transfer of technology from the United States to China in response to the rapid growth and dominance of some high-tech companies in China such as *Huawei* that appeared to be an apparent competitor of *Apple* (Oramah and Dzene 2019). Gompert, Cevallos, & Garafola (2016); Hopewell (2019); Kwan (2019); Liu (2018); Stiglitz (2017) expressed concerned over the possibility of increasing deterioration of the trade war between the two countries which could result into international economic instability or the emergence of two opposing economic blocs headed by the two powers.

Similarly, in *Trends of U.S.-China Trade Disputes and Beijing’s Policy Options*, Sun Tianhao and Wang Yan opined that the United States sees the economic rise of China as a threat to its economic leverage. Thus, taking China as a challenger that needs to be repelled. They made a comparative analogy of the current United States – China relation with the case of the economic rise of Japan more than 20 years and the reaction of the United States towards it. Tianhao & Yan (2018) explained that when Japan was rising 20 years ago, the United States had the same anti-Japanese sentiment and tactics. The United States tried to destroy Japanese multinational conglomerates like *Toyota* and *Honda* and crippled *Toshiba* with sanctions. And United States succeeded in bringing the economic might of Japan down. In the end, Alfayad (2019); Blackwill & Tellis (2015); Campbell & Ratner (2018); Tianhao & Yan (2018) expressed optimism for China as a formidable challenger and likely to survive the United States’ manoeuvres. This according to them is due the economic size of China, the rate of its technological advancement, abundant human resource, and its influence on the international stage which is far greater than that of Japan even at the peak of the Japanese growth.
Discussion

This section provides a critical and constructive analysis of the available information related to the issue under consideration. As mentioned earlier, this paper relied on secondary sources of data to evaluate the phenomenon. Thus, some patterns are identified from the information gathered, summarised, and organised into headings and subheadings, assessed and made comparison between the United States and China vis-à-vis the assumption of the Power Transition theory bearing in mind the initial interrogation guiding the paper as whether China can peacefully rise to hegemony under American dominated international system.

The Growing Influence of China and the Decline of the United States

China is on the rise and transforming into a significant and influential player on the international stage. It provides worldwide economic strength and grows militarily as well (Lee 2019). Astarita & Lim (2014) argued that the process of power transition from the US to China is in motion. Below are some indicators of sustained rise of China and relative decline of the United States.

Figure 1: Percentage of the Population of China Living Below Extreme Poverty Line

Not very much long ago in 1978, 90 individuals out of every 100 Chinese were living below the international poverty line of 1.90 dollars per day as indicated in Figure 1 above. Considering the large population of China of over 1 billion people, these statistics signified hunger, malnutrition, diseases, and national and human insecurity. And all these factors are detrimental to growth and development.

Paradoxically, China came up with one of the most effective national anti-poverty strategies that took its citizens out of poverty within a practically miraculous short period. In contrast, today, China is opposite to what it used to be in 40 years ago. Thus, nearly all the population of China of approximately 1.3 billion people are enjoying an excellent standard of living with sustainable source of income (Allison 2018).

Figure 2: Percentage of the Population of China Living Above Extreme Poverty Line


As shown in Figure 2 above, the contemporary national power of China has turned the 1978 pyramid into an inverted one with around 99% of its population living above 1.9 dollars per day. Consequently, the overwhelming majority of the Chinese population fell into the middle-class category. The Chinese growth came with impressive development in all the human and national security indicators.
Although in the 1970s, China was a poor Communist country, but today it strategised to emerge as a global power. First, China started from the scratch by copying business methods and developed its commerce and exports networks globally, developed machinery and make use of its abundant and cheap human resources to spin the will of growth and development. Moreover, China made a massive investment in educating its citizens in the field of science and technology which played a significant role in power today.

### Table 2: Compared GDP Based on PPP for the United States and China (In Billions of US Dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2024 (Projection)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>5,767</td>
<td>18,345</td>
<td>35,596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>12,214</td>
<td>17,522</td>
<td>25,093</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Going by the above figures in Table 2, it is evident that the Chinese economy has been doubling every ten years. This indicates that China’s policies are very stable which is crucial in the implementation of Long-term plans. From the 1970s to date, the cumulative result of the sustained growth of China resulted in the significant improvement in the standard of living of its citizens by almost 50 fold. As latest a 2004 China was half of the United States in terms of GDP (PPP). By 2015 the Chinese GDP (PPP) became equal to that of the United States. And the current projection indicated that by 2024 GDP (PPP) will double that of the United States. The consequence of this dramatic change will be felt everywhere. For example, in the current trade war, China is the number one trading partner of all the major Asian countries. At this juncture, Allison (2017) in his attempt to establish a possible armed confrontation between the United States and China he explained that the Harvard’s “Thucydides Trap file” has documented and evaluated some 500 years of history and found 16 cases in which a rising power threatened to displace a ruling power. And out of the 16 cases, 12 ended in war.

**Chasing Away the United States from China’s “Backyard”**

Mearsheimer (2001) explained that being a hegemon does not mean the absolute domination of the world; rather, it is when a nation dominates
it “backyards” or region and feel secure in it. According to him, this regional hegemony allows the dominating country to go snooping in other country’s “backyards” or regions. Mearsheimer’s explanation is evident in the foreign policy of the United States towards the Middle East and North Africa, South and Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe etc. The United States has dominated the North and South America which allowed her to roam around the globe and meddle into other countries’ affairs for her gain. However, the growth in the Chinese influence in Asia signifies a diminishing power and the eventual expulsion of the United States from the region. The complete consolidation of China’s dominance in Asia is one of the critical strategic achievements of its rise as a regional hegemon.

Accordingly, China consolidated its influence in East Asia and developed a cordial relationship with Russia; followed by unprecedented economic growth and prestige. The economic transformation of China spearheaded the recovery of Asia from its financial meltdown of 1997. This marked the point in history when China overtook Japan as the dominant economic player in Asia (Campbell 2008). The economic transformation and influence of China in Asia became the impetus for the economic transformation of Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia, and other Asian countries which made them important actors on the world economic stage. Furthermore, by the end of 2005 the growth of China facilitated a global output of over 33% by Asian countries. Additionally, China transformed into the most important member of ASEAN, and strategically co-operating with other major Asian countries such as Japan on matters that can of significance to the economic stability of the region (Campbell 2008).

In recent years, another significant success of China is its considerable investments in East Asia and the orchestration of a new economic architecture outside the realm of the Bretton Woods system. China has engaged East Asian countries in establishing the infrastructure for the consolidation of an Asian based Bond Market. One of the critical strategies of the bond market is to reduce over-dependence on western controlled capital markets by mobilising savings in regional currencies for long term investment in Asia (Layne 2008, Wang 2018).

On the other hand, some power politics analysts are making emphasis on the military might of the United States in the Pacific region. But China is consolidating its political and economic leverage in Asia to the extent that countries like Malaysia, Singapore and others are sceptical in collaborating with the United States in any form of a military exercise that could provoke China in the South China Sea. Soon, China will have a powerful influence on the operation of the United States’ pacific command (Campbell 2008, Lee
Going by the facts above, there is no doubt that China is getting closer to the United States. So, by measuring the gap between the two powers an indication of the relative decline of the US is evident. But it does not signify that China will surpass the United States in the coming decades in all ramifications. It only means that China will be larger than the United States as an economy. Another issue to look at is the population of China of 1.3 billion growing at a rate of 7.5%. Eventually, China will be larger, but it will be much poor than the United States in terms of per capita income since the population of the United States is only 3.9 million.

Lastly, what we have to know is that if United States is in decline, what type of decline is she experiencing? Is it an absolute or a relative decline? The absolute decline is like what happened to the ancient Roman Empire. Rome was an agrarian economy with no indigenous sources of productivity; it grew richer by conquering; as the empire was increasing its territory without corresponding increases in the economy that will cater for the vast empire and its civil wars erupted, it started declining which eventually led to its fall; but for that to happen it took about 300 years. If what happened to the Roman Empire is absolute, then is it the same process the United States is experiencing today? The answer is negative.

The Power Transition Theory: A 21st Century Critical Perspective in Relation to the Rise Of China

In the 21st century, one crucial point that Power Transition theorists failed to comprehend adequately is that China could only become rich in the international environment created by the *Pax Americana*. The whole Bretton Woods system gave all the major powers free and unfettered access to global markets. Before the post World War II international order, nations go to war to get these resources. While in the current global system, the United States offered them for free. The deal was: The United States acts as world policeman and keeps the trade routes open with its massive navy and military might, and, in exchange, the world helps the United States fight Soviet Communism. The United States even sacrificed its economic dominance and a percentage of its GDP and came up with Marshall Plan to make this deal work. The world eagerly jumped at the deal, and places like China and Germany got rich on trade (Harris 2016; Tang 2018).

But here is the issue: The treat of the Soviet Union is gone. The circumstances that created the Post World War II system are no longer in
force. Currently, all the United States knows is that it is carrying the massive burden of debt to be “the world’s policeman”. It is losing money and market share by supporting the infrastructure to allow other countries to get rich. Considering the foreign policy advances of the United States, it is now re-thinking its old post World War II set-up. Once that set-up disappears, China will crumble because the Chinese economy heavily relied on exports. If those trade routes are abandoned by the United States, there will be a scramble for other countries to take control of them; and that means chaos. The United States might not care much because only a small fraction of her economy is tied up in exports (Wen 2018). Presently, the United States is not as vulnerable as China, and Europe are. The United States can manufacture its goods, grow its food, and generate its energy. Whereas, other emerging economies like China and others might not survive it (Fung 2013, Wen 2018).

Another issue is the concept of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) due to the advent and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The Cold War would have turned into a “Hot War” if not because of the balance of nuclear terror between the United States and the Soviet Union, more especially during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. Just like with Russia, war is not an option between China and the United States due to the nuclear second-strike capability the two countries possessed (Christensen 2012, Tanter 2017).
Figure 3: Top 15 Countries with Highest Military Expenditure as of 2018 According to the Classification of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

In 2018, the global military expenditure stood at 1.47 trillion USD which accounted for 81 percent of the of entire money spent on military worldwide. The United States spends on military more than any other country on the planet with an estimated expenditure of 649 billion USD representing 36 percent of the global military spendings as indicated in Figure 3.3 above. However, compared to the year 2010 when it reached its apex, the military expenditure of the United States is lower by 19 percent in 2018. The decreasest is certainly due to the United States’ Government efforts to address deficit and balance her budget throughout most of the 2010s (Tian et al. 2019).

As indicated in Figure 3, China comes second in terms of military spending after the United States. Although, China is second but not a close contender as the United States has more than doubled the Chinese military expenditure. In 2018, China spent 250 billion USD on its military power which
stands for 14 percent of the world’s military spending. The military expenditure of China has increased almost 10 folds in 2018 compared to 1994. Moreover, China has recorded a steady growth in her military spending. Though, the 5 percent growth recorded in 2018 is the lowest since 1995. The decrease in the rate of the Chinese military spending is associated to the slowing of its economic growth in 2018 which is the lowest in 28 years. Unlike the United States, China has a policy of making her military spending proportional to her economic growth (Tian et al. 2019). As a subset of the general military spending and capability, a country’s nuclear power determines its strength or vulnerability on the international system. Table 3.2 below shows the compared status of the nuclear weapon capability of the United States and China as of 2019.

Table 3: Status of Nuclear Weapons for the United States and China as of 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Deployed Strategic</th>
<th>Deployed Nonstrategic</th>
<th>Reserve/Nondeployed</th>
<th>Military Stockpile</th>
<th>Total Inventory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>1,600g</td>
<td>150h</td>
<td>2,050i</td>
<td>3,800j</td>
<td>6,185k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>0m</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>290m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: FAS (2019).

As interpreted by the Federation of American Scientists (FAS), deployed strategic refers to the nuclear warheads deployed on intercontinental missiles and at heavy bomber bases. While the deployed nonstrategic are nuclear warheads deployed on bases with operational short-range delivery systems. The reserve or nondeployed are nuclear warheads that are not deployed on launchers and in storage. Whereas the military stockpile refers to active and inactive nuclear warheads that are in the custody of the armed forces and earmarked for use by commissioned deliver lunchers. Lastly, the total inventory of nuclear for each country refers to the warheads in the armed forces stockpile as well as retired, but still intact, it also includes warheads designated to be dismantled (FAS 2019).

Since 1964 when China first tested its first atomic bomb, the country has maintained the strategy of minimum nuclear deterrence. Thus, China believes that an efficient nuclear second-strike capability would be adequate to serve as credible deterrence from any nuclear offensive on China. As such,
the Chinese concentrated on maintaining as low as 290 stockpile of nuclear inventory, but with a reliable and efficient second strike capabilities enough to deter and repress aggression (Kristensen and Korda 2019a).

In contrast, the United States maintained a considerable high number of nuclear arsenal only second to Russia. Approximately, the United States Department of Defence maintains nuclear stockpile of almost 3,800 warheads; and most of them are deployed. Currently in the United States, 2,050 nuclear warheads are categorised as reserved; while 2,385 are designated retired and waiting to be dismantled. In sum, the United States possesses nearly 6,185 nuclear weapons. Of this number, 1,750 nuclear bombs that are deployed, around 1,300 are mounted on ballistic missiles, while 300 warheads are mounted at strategic nuclear bases within the United States, with some additional 150 strategic nuclear warheads deployed across some strategic locations in European (Kristensen and Korda 2019b).

Armed confrontation between the United States and China is a losing game for all. Thus, a full-scale military conflict is doubtful since both China and the United States are designated nuclear weapon powers by the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Then again, this day and age there are many other ways to undermine another regime, which include: trade wars, sanctions, espionage, propaganda - all of which are already well underway. Finally, in this paper, it is argued that even if the rise of China will result to armed confrontation, it won’t likely be between China and the United States but between China and a host of other regional powers that are not yet known.

Final Remarks and Recommendation

This paper explored the prospects of peace or war between the declining United States and rising China. Many scholars of international security and pundits believed that the rise of China would be conflictual (Allison 2017; Campbell 2008; Wang 2018). On the contrary, this paper argues that China could surpass the United States as an economy, but there is no indication of armed confrontation between the two nations. This is because, in the 21st century, there are changing trends in international relations and global politics. Besides, China has not reached the stage of power maturity yet. Therefore, as rational state, it would not prematurely plunge itself into conflict with the United States. Because the outcome of armed confrontation between China and the United States will be a setback for the world in general and particularly a bigger problem for China at this critical stage of her growth.

More so, in today’s world nations are intertwined by the forces of
globalisation which created inexorable economic interdependence, rapid advancement in military technology, and the concept of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) due to the advent and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. These factors have necessitated a revisit and a critical evaluation of the Power Transition theory, which was propounded in mid-20th century to make it applicable in the contemporary international system.

Generally, the problem is that after World War II the new global order was structured to serve the western powers while the rest of the world was left out. Although China is a permanent member of the United Nation Security Council, still, that will not be a fair share for rising China. Thus, if United States could act strategically to incorporate China into the camp of nations that are getting a reasonable fair share of the system through multilateral approaches, then the prospect of the transition to be peaceful will increase. Though China is not a liberal democracy, facilitating and accelerating the exposure of China to the global norms and practices within the framework of international law could make her less violent and moderately ambitious during the transition. This strategy can let the two nations to have some common interests of mutual benefit. Therefore, if China can benefit from these norms and practices, then, challenging the established *Pax Americana* status quo will be counterproductive. Zhu (2005) added that if the United States could accommodate some of the significant interests of china the prospect of peaceful coexistence will increase. He, however, maintained that for the world to achieve this harmonious transition, the United States has to sacrifice some her interests and benefits it has been enjoying as the hegemony. This will finally create an international atmosphere of cooperation and fair competition for a better world.

All in all, Abramo Organski propounded the Power Transition theory in the 20th century. Therefore, the definite assumption of the theory of the escalation of armed confrontation during power transition might not have substantial validity in the 21st century as a result of the nuclear balance of terror, rapid advancement in military technology, and complex economic interdependence brought about by the forces of globalisation. Consequently, the present-day Power Transition theorists need to revisit the theory to accommodate contemporary factors to make it fit adequately in the discourse of international relations and global politics of the 21st-century international system.
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ABSTRACT
The apparent eroding in the hegemonic power of the United States and the sustained growth of China has triggered debate as to whether the rise of China will be peaceful or conflictual. Structural realism posits that the world is characterised by the anarchic ordering principle in which there is no central authority sitting above the states. Therefore, the absence of a “leviathan” on the international system automatically makes every state equal on the system which created an atmosphere of competition for the maximisation of power for survival. On a similar line of reasoning, the Power Transition theory as a variant theory within realism postulates that when the international system is structured based on the principle of hierarchy, peace will reign. It means that when international relations are regulated and influenced by a dominant power, the international system becomes stable. But the emergence of a dissatisfied powerful nation to challenge the hegemon usually ends up in war. Based on this assumption, Power Transition theorists argued that the rise of China to rival the dominance of the United States could not be peaceful. The Power Transition theory has influenced many academics to have the belief that the two nations will end up in “Thucydides’ Trap”. The inclusion of the current variables into the Theory will make it applicable and adequately fit in the discourse of international relations and global politics of the 21st-century international system.

KEYWORDS
China; Hegemony; Power Transition Theory; United States.

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