

## **China's Reaction to External Threats from the Perspective of Foreign Policy and International Politics Theories**

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### **Abstract**

China's increasing power as one of the most important revisionist powers has received different reactions from its neighbors and the dominant powers of the international system. In fact, China as a rising and revisionist power challenges the regional and hegemonic order. In such a situation, the deterrent actions exerted by the United States, as a hegemon of international system, seems to be natural. The present research is an attempt to study China's reactions to foreign threats from the perspective of theories of International Politics and Foreign Policy Analysis. The paper enjoys a descriptive-analytical design with the application of the theory on the case. The data collection was made through the study of existing literature and virtual data. The findings of this study show that China's reaction to existing or potential threats can carry very different interpretations and analytical results from the perspective of different theoretical perspectives.

**Keywords:** China, The Level of Analysis, Foreign Policy Analyses, Deterrence, Decision Making.

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## **1.Introduction**

According to many international relations theorists, the era of the decline of American hegemony and the end of the era of "American peace" in the world order has begun (Clark and Hook,2012). For example, Farid Zakaria (2009), mentions "the rise of the rest" as the third great shift of power in the international system, considering China as the main symbol of this process. China's power increasing, which is mainly in the economic and military spheres and is reminiscent of Paul Kennedy's "Theory of Decline" in "The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers", has naturally been met with reactions from US leaders to deter it. In this context, we can mention the shift in the grand strategy of US from the Middle East to Asia-Pacific during the presidency of Barack Obama and the Pentagon document in 2012. The document cited China as an emerging power that could have a major impact on US security and the economy (Sustaining US Global Leadership Priorities for 21 century: 2012).

According to US leaders, the China is a revisionist state that seeks to disrupt the existing order of the international system (Mohamadi and Zarghami, 2019:175). Schweller (2011:287) believes that revisionist states can pose a serious threat to the dominant power in international system, given the "scope of the goals," the "risk-taking," and the "nature of the goals and tools used to achieve those goals." According to him, the growth of these powers, including China, in the current order is perceived as a revisionist behavior not only against the United States but also against the unipolar structure led by the United States. According to him, emerging powers can act as supporters or destroyers of the current order. According to Schweller (2014: 27), China, as an emerging power and as a destructive state, seeks to delegitimize the established regional order with the aim of hegemony over the Asia-Pacific region and to exclude the United States from this order.

Therefore, the restrictive and balancing behavior of the United States as a rational actor towards China is a completely natural reaction. An example of this can be seen in the bilateral military security alliances between the US state and China's neighboring states, including South Korea, Japan, Australia, India, Singapore, the Philippines, etc. These alliances can pose a threat or perception of threat to Chinese leaders and provoke reactions from them. The latest example is Donald Trump's signing of the "Taiwan

Agreement to Promote the Island's Global Position", which provoked a strong reaction from Chinese officials.

A plethora of research has already been carried out on the Chinese uprising and its reasons, as well as the way the United States is dealing with this issue (Rasooli Saniabadi,2019), but, to my best knowledge, no study has yet been done on how China faces external threats using this theoretical framework.

With this introduction, the main purpose of this article is to examine how China, as one of the great powers of the international system, reacts to external threats, which mainly stem from US counterbalancing actions in its periphery. In this paper, we use two levels of theoretical analysis: micro (foreign policy analysis theories) and macro (international policy theories) as theoretical foundations to examine the reactions.

## **2. Research Method**

This inquiry enjoys a descriptive-analytical design applying the theory on the case. The data was collected through the study of existing literature and virtual data.

## **3. Theoretical Framework**

In the 1950s, the field of international relations (IR) was divided into two separate sections: foreign policy analysis (FPA) and the study of international politics (IP). The concept of state was in the center of this division. This concept was seen as a black box for scholars of international politics, but foreign policy analysts focused on its content and the real people who constitute and represented it (Kubalkova, 2001).

In this regard, Wendt (1999:11) explicitly states that theories of international politics are different from theories that seek to explain the behavior of states, or theories of foreign policy. In international politics we are confronted with "Actor General Theory", that view the state as an integrated and rational actor that behaves under the influence of external material variables. In foreign policy analysis, however, we are confronted with "Actor Specific Theory" (George,1994). In contrast to these reductionist views, constructivists as a middle ground do not accept this distinction and emphasize the mutual consistency of agent and structure (Kubalkova,2001:23).

### **3-1. Foreign Policy Analysis**

Foreign policy is an intermediate level of analysis between domestic and international levels of analysis. Foreign policy is a multi-layered process that includes the following:

- Decision making process (bargaining models and rational choice strategies),
- Goals and tools,
- Internal environment and internal resources of foreign policy,
- Psychological factors
- Possibilities and limitations of external environment (Hudson and Vore, 1995).

Foreign policy analysts use the concept of “actor” instead of the metaphysical concept of “state.” They believe that foreign policy analysts face specific issues in their studies and cannot use comprehensive and testable generalizations (Hudson, 2005). The field of foreign policy analysis is composed of various theories, one of the most important of which is the theory of “behaviorism.” Behaviorists are those who focus on the behavior of decision-makers rather than on their motives and intentions. According to them, it is possible to know and study the behavior through the evidence in it. According to behaviorists, the purpose of foreign policy analysis as a scientific field is to search for the rules and behavioral patterns of decision makers in different states and different situations, also extracting similarities and behavioral differences of decision makers according to factors such as geographical size, type of political system, level of development etc. (Kubalkova, 2001).

The second category of foreign policy analysis theories is “decision making theories”. These theories focus on how foreign policy decisions are made. Attention to the foreign policy decision-making process goes back to the publication of Snyder's book (1962), “Decision Making as an Approach to the Study of International Politics.” These approaches follow the “rational choice model” in analyzing the foreign policy of states and how they make decisions. The rational choice model includes purposeful and result-oriented calculations.

According to Snyder's model of absolute rationality, it is assumed that decision makers, after identifying the goals and gathering complete information, determine the consequences of each choice and choose the best decision) Snyder, 1962:54).

In rational choice theory, “utility maximization” by actors is the most important aim of states' foreign policy. Utility maximization means states in the face of external threats, first identify the various options and then choose the methods that

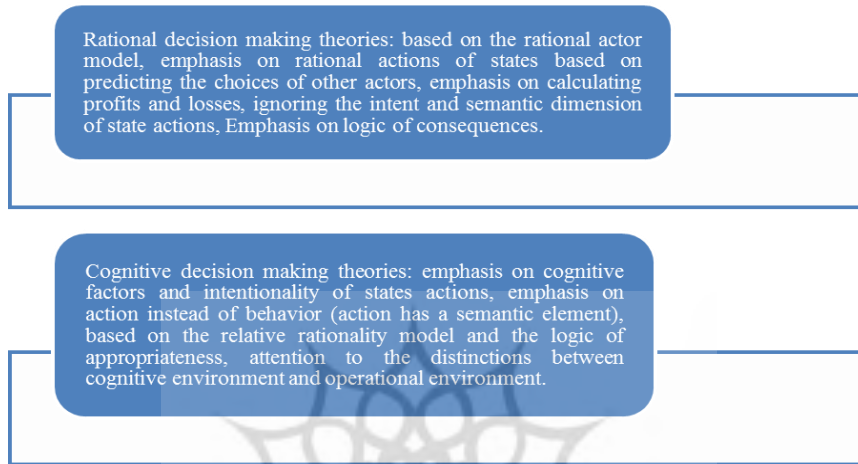
achieve the goals at the lowest cost (Groom,2007). According to rational choice theory, even “limited nuclear war” is in some cases as a rational choice because it decreases the costs of the threat and increases the credibility of the threat (Snyder, 1962).

In rational choice approaches, decision makers are considered as a black box and their intentions are not taken into account. In contrast to these theories are “cognitive approaches” that emphasize the role of “perceptions” and “beliefs” in the construction of foreign policy. These theories critique the rationality of previous approaches to foreign policy making, arguing that foreign policymakers do not act within the framework of absolute rationality. Jarvis's book, “Perceptions and Misunderstandings in International Politics” (1976) and the book “Making Foreign Policy: The Impact of Cognition” (Cottam, 1986) are important works in this field. Emphasis on the psychological environment of individuals and decision-maker groups in foreign policy is a feature of these theories.

Psychological environment refers to decision makers' perceptions of their operational or international environment or their political and social context. According to these theories, the incompatibility between the decision makers' perception of the operational environment and the reality in it leads to unrealistic decisions in the foreign policy. Cognitive theories emphasize the impact of the role of new leaders on foreign policy change. Welch (2005), for example, believes that change in foreign policy is not a normal process and, if it occurs, is directly related to decision-makers' perceptions from previous foreign policy failures.

In these approaches, the emphasis is on “political psychology” or the psychological dimension of foreign policy. Using the “operational codes’ concept” means identifying the fundamental political beliefs of leaders about the world, as well as their favorite means and style in pursuing foreign policy aims (Derivera,1968; Lasswel,1948). Cal Holsti's explanation of the “national role” falls also within the category of cognitive analysis. In his view, the understanding and perception of elites and leaders of the national role is essentially important in foreign policy choices (Holsti,1970). By distinguishing between the “psychological environment” and the “operational environment” of decision-making, Sprouts (1957) believes that the gap between the two environments within which decision-makers operate can have a major impact on policy-making.

**Figure (1): The Distinction between Rational Decision Making Theories and Cognitive Decision Making Theories**



### **3-2. Level of International Politics Analysis**

Theories that are placed at this level of analysis, with a top-down view and ignoring the internal differences of states, pay attention only to the structural conditions and consider the similarity of behavior between them. Theories of international politics can be divided into two categories: structural realists represented by Waltz and neoliberal institutionalists. Both of these theories emphasize the structural constraints and the causal effects of these constraints on actors' behavior. Structural constraints for institutionalists, include international institutions and regimes. Institutions and regimes, in addition to restricting the behavior of actors and causing them to behave in a regular manner, create opportunities for them to face threats. Waltz (1979) attributes structural pressures to anarchy and a lack of central authority. In Waltz's view, the structure of international politics is very stable, and events and patterns, including the pattern of balance of power, are constantly repeated by states. From the neoliberal institutionalist point of view, however, under the influence of structural processes (institutions and regimes), states have little tendency to conflict but more tendency toward economic development and trade cooperation to reduce conflict and threats.

**Table (1): The Differences between International Politics Analysis and Foreign Policy Analysis**

<b>International Politics Analysis</b>	<b>Foreign Policy Analysis</b>
Emphasis on the metaphysical concept of state	Emphasis on the concept of actor
Emphasis on generalizing and presenting general patterns of behavior in international politics ( general actor theory)	Rejection of generalization and emphasis on behavioral differentiation of states (special actor theory)
Considering state as an integrated and rational actor	Considering the state as a pluralistic actor represented by different institutions and individuals.
Emphasis on the structure and distribution of power to understand foreign policy behaviors	Emphasis on the agent and its intention (cognitive approaches)

### **3-3. Constructivism as a Middle Ground between Foreign Policy and International Politics**

Constructivists as semantic approaches in international relations do not accept the distinction between structure and agent and emphasize the mutual consistency between them. For constructivists, agent means a person who takes action. Agent is a human being or dependent on a human being who has the ability to choose in a certain social situation and acts according to it. Therefore, the key feature of agent is having intention and will. Unlike agent, the term structure, which is emphasized by the analysts at the level of international politics, is involuntary and deterministic. For them, structure also means observable patterns that motivate social action (Kubalkova,2001).

The similarity of constructivists with cognitive approaches is to distinguish between action and behavior. As stated, the followers of the behavioral revolution emphasize behavior. Behavior refers specifically to observable phenomena in which intention and meaning have no place. According to constructivists, both behaviorists and rational decision making theorists ignore the agent as a social entity and consider behavior as a dependent variable with the possibility of objective evaluation, so they believe in behavioral regularity and predictability of foreign policy behaviors (Rittberger,2004).

### **4.Research Findings**

To answer the main question of this study, that is, how the Chinese state reacts to external threats, which is mainly due to US balancing measures, we classify the

research findings into four topics based on “cognitive approaches”, “structural neorealist theory”, “neoliberal institutional theory”, and “constructivist theory”. Then, in the data analysis section, we will present analytical research models.

#### **4-1. Chinese Leaders’ Perceptions and their Impacts on Security Policies**

Since its formation in 1949, the Republic of China has had five decision-making leaders whose perceptions of internal and external opportunities and constraints (operational environment) have had a profound impact on the state’s security policies. An important part of security policy is how a state faces external threats. During the Chinese Communist Revolution in 1949, Mao became the main and most important decision-making leader of China. He emphasized ideas such as "People's War", "Mission to Support Other Communist States", "Counter-Imperialism", "Third World Leader Based on the Doctrine of the Three Worlds" and "Supporting Anti-Imperialist Movements". These ideas reflected his perceptions as a revolutionary leader. In his view, the realization of China's national interests and the successful confrontation with external threats depended on the realization of socialist ideals at home and abroad. Thus, China's national security strategy under Mao was based on a kind of pessimism about the great powers. Another aspect of this strategy was the idea that World War III was inevitable.

After Deng Xiaoping came to power, many changes took place in China's domestic and foreign policies. These changes were due to Deng's different view on the outside world. Deng emphasized ideas such as “no enemy” and “peace and development.” Such ideas played a key role in how China dealt with the outside world. According to Deng, the world’s perception of China as a threat must be eliminated and soft power must replace hard power. The best strategy for China in the face of external threats would be patience, hide transparency, and not pursue leadership, which was known as “Deng's ambiguity strategy”. As a result of these perceptual changes, China changed from a “revolutionary actor” to a “regular actor”, trying to conform to the international order. During this period, China emphasized "development-oriented diplomacy" and “open door policy” in the face of foreign threats so economic development became the foundation of national security (Gill,2006:17). According to Deng, the main problem of international politics is "development and peace" instead of "war and peace", because development leads to peace and cooperation between countries (Shamiri and



Shahandeh,2018:34). These central concepts of Deng's thought contrasted with Mao's central concepts, which emphasized the duality of "revolution and war."

Jiang Zemin, the next leader in China, believed that internal and external security could be created for China only through economic power. One of Jiang Zemin's most important ideas was "peaceful interaction" with the outside world, especially the great powers and international institutions. The idea of "diplomacy of the great powers" and the design of a "new security concept" at the end of the bipolar world were among the most important ideas of the new Chinese leader. According to this view, the precondition for security is common interests, not military capabilities, and confrontation with threats should be through mutual trust, not military balance and deterrence (Li,2012:136).

As China's next leader, Hujin Tao also stressed the need to reduce the role of ideology in foreign policy. He emphasized two main ideas in foreign policy in facing external threats. The first was the idea of "peaceful emergence" that was replaced in 2004 by the idea of "peaceful development" because it represented China as a threat. Following the idea, the White Paper on "China's Way to Peaceful Development" was published in 2005. Since then, the idea has become a dominant concept in Chinese foreign policy. The second idea was the idea of a "harmonious world", which meant Hujin Tao's emphasis on global peace and stability through cooperation. In his view, in a harmonious world, the security of the actors becomes interdependent, and mutual respect and common welfare decrease security threats. Both of these ideas, which stemmed directly from the Chinese leadership's perceptions, reflect peace and interaction rather than confrontation in China's security policy. The doctrine of "peripheral diplomacy" and "good neighbor" was also expressed by the Chinese leader in order to better represent China's identity. These two ideas became central to China's national security policy in relation to the outside world (Lenteigne,2009:109).

Xi Jinping, as the current leader of China (since 2012), also seeks to shape a new international order in which China has a better role and position. According to his cognitive orientation, the only appropriate way to deal with external threats, especially US counterbalancing actions, is to make China more economically powerful and to pursue a developmental foreign policy. The most important actions and signs of this central idea are:

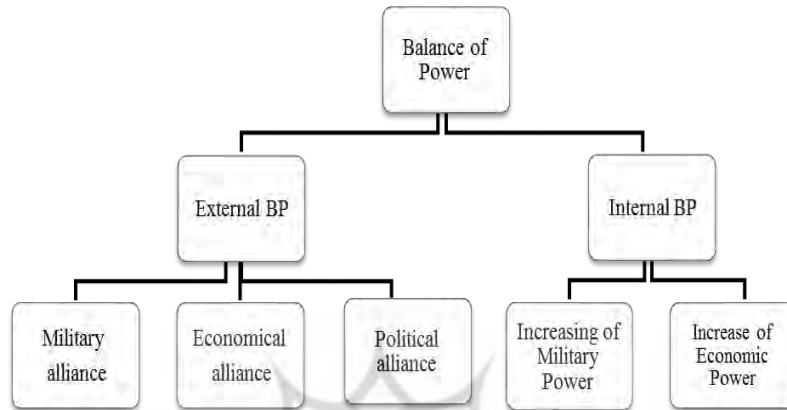
- The project of the economic belt "New Silk Road" on both sea and land routes in 2013 for the increase of China's geopolitical influence,

- Efforts to establish the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) against Western institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.
- Introducing the idea of the "Chinese dream" to set China as a model for the developing world. Some see this idea as a neo-socialist and anti-Western model and see it as a tool for China to confront the Western liberal democratic order.
- Introducing the idea of "community with a common destiny" which can be interpreted as an important sign of his cognitive orientation to counter Western hegemony, defend cultural pluralism and polarization in world politics, as well as strengthen China's relations with a wide range of countries in the international system (Xiang,2016:53).
- Introducing the policy of "three no" means "not to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries", "not to expand the sphere of influence" and "not to establish hegemony" (Ze,2015).

All of these ideas can have a direct impact on China's security policies and how it interacts with the outside world.

#### **4-2. Examining the Internal and External Balance of Power in China's Security Policy**

According to the theory of structural realism, structural pressures resulting from anarchy force states to adopt similar behaviors in the face of external threats. In the face of anarchy and insecurity, states, as rational actors, have to resort to policies such as "balance of power" and "deterrence" to control threats. In Waltz's view, the balance of power is an unintended consequence of states' decisions to ensure their survival in the structure, which ultimately leads to the balance and stability of the system (Waltz,1979:199). The balance of power as a behavior includes the internal balance of power and the external balance of power (Little, 2007).

**Figure (2): Types of Balance of Power**

(Source: Little,2007:54)

According to structural realism, the Chinese state resorts to internal and external balancing strategy when facing external threats posed by the structure. In terms of internal balance, we can mention China's economic empowerment in recent years since Deng Xiaoping came to power, as well as the country's military empowerment (modernization and equipping of military capabilities). China ranks second in the world in attracting foreign investment and GDP, and third in terms of foreign trade volume. The country's GDP has grown at an annual average of 10 percent since 1979, but this ratio has risen to 15 percent in 2015, and if this economic growth continues, China will be the world's largest economy by 2026. In this regard, the assessment of international financial institutions also shows the continuation of China's economic growth in the coming decades (Santasombat, 2015).

In terms of military power, China has had the second largest military budget in the world after the United States since 2005. China has also modernized and empowered its military forces in various fields (Muzalevskey,2015:27). Military empowerment has entered a new phase since 2015 under Xi Jinping. This empowerment aims to strengthen China's strategic deterrence and repel external threats (Shamiri and Shahandeh,2018:39). China has also resorted to external balances to deal with threats. This balance is in the form of economic and military cooperation with other states. In economic cooperation, China actively participates in organizations such as BRICS, Shanghai Organization

and “Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank” in the form of the “Beijing Consensus.” These organizations are seen as alternatives to Western-centered organizations such as the “International Monetary Fund” and the “World Bank.”

In military cooperation, according to China's 2015 military strategy document, Russia is defined as the country's most important military ally. According to the document, China seeks to expand its military relations with Russia within the framework of comprehensive strategic cooperation, which includes military exchanges and cooperation (China's Military Strategy, 2015). In this regard, China signed three military arms purchase agreements with Russia in 2017. Pakistan is another China's military ally in the nuclear field. China has the highest level of nuclear cooperation with Pakistan. The other Chinese military cooperation includes its participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization with Russia against NATO and the United States.

#### **4-3. The Role of International Institutions and Regimes in China's Security Policy (Constraints and Opportunities)**

According to neoliberal institutionalist theories, international institutions have causal effects, as structural factors, on a state's particular behaviors in foreign policy. In this paper, based on the available data, the author claims that the role of international institutions and regimes for China, which relies on soft power and multilateral and development-oriented diplomacy, is a determining factor in shaping its security policy and how to deal with external threats. This variable creates opportunities and constraints for China.

- China uses international organizations and institutions as an opportunity to expand soft power in the face of external threats: In this regard, we can refer to China's actions in holding intergovernmental conferences with the aim of introducing "development based on the Chinese model", holding festivals and cultural tours in different countries and using public diplomacy to attract the public opinion of other nations. These measures can be considered as pursuing national interests and facing foreign threats. According to Chinese leaders, the main goal of soft power is to reject the "Chinese threat" theory. By creating peace and stability with all countries, a good neighborly policy based on a “good neighbor strategy” and realizing the idea that the emergence or development of China is peaceful (Kurlantzick, 2007:61).
- China uses regional economic organizations to introduce and encourage the Chinese development model: Many analysts see the Chinese development

model as one of China's sources of soft power in the face of external threats, in their view, the Beijing Consensus as a new development model is in line with the needs of developing countries and is more attractive to them (Williamson, 2012:5-6).

- China uses international institutions and organizations to eliminate perceptions that imagine China as a threat: China has convinced other countries, especially developing countries, that China is a regular player in global governance. This image is being pursued through international organizations using the "diplomacy of the great powers", the "peripheral diplomacy" as well as the "diplomacy of developing countries", which together lead to a multidimensional diplomacy for this country. In this way, China has been able to refine its image as a threatening state. Obviously, representing China as a non-threatening state can directly reduce the external threats against it.

The result is that China's use of international institutions and organizations (in the form of active diplomacy, economic diplomacy, multilateral diplomacy, as well as participation in UN peacekeeping operations) can create both opportunities and constraints for the country (structural opportunities and structural constraints). Because through the process of socialization, China commits not to take irregular action in response to external threats, which is outside international norms.

#### **4-4. Identity-based foundations in China's national security policy**

As stated, from the perspective of the constructivist approach, in order to understand how China responds to external threats, the semantic foundations that shape China's identity must be considered. China's identity shapes the perception of its national role, and that perception shapes how it responds to external threats. According to the findings of this study, the semantic foundations that shape China's identity can be divided into three different sections.

The first part deals with:

- The teachings of the Confucian school,
- Nationalist ideas (the colonial presence of foreign powers as the main motivator of these interests)
- Socialist ideas (the occurrence of the communist revolution in 1949).

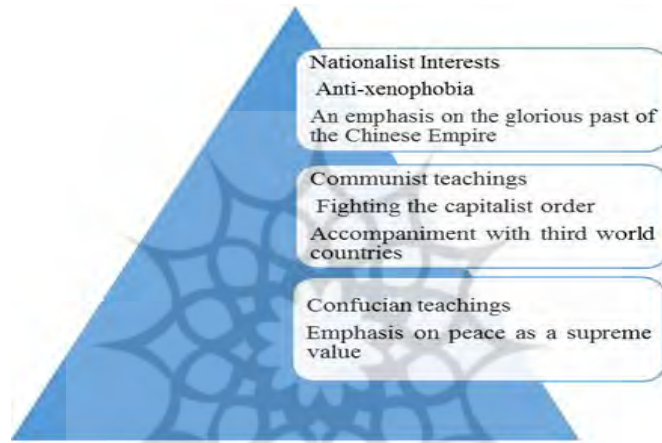
The second part deals with the five principles that shape China's foreign policy, including:

- "Mutual respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other states,"
- "Mutual non-aggression,"
- "Non-interference in the internal affairs of others,"

- "Equality and mutual interests."
- "Peaceful coexistence."

Finally, the third section deals with the internal discourses that exist within China, each representing and defining a different identity and role for China. Depending on the discourse which prevails, the national role defined for this country will vary.

**Figure (3): The Semantic Foundations of China's Identity**



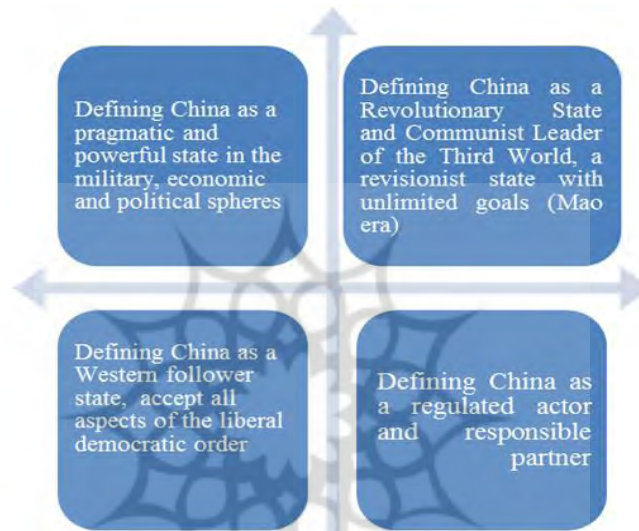
One of China's cultural values is the "mine", the nature of which implies balanced relations in the world. Relationships in which no government is superior to another. This idea implies a pattern of universal balance (Chen,2009:86). According to this idea, the polarization of the world is the most desirable option for the Chinese in a situation where there is no possibility of a virtuous world government.

**Table (2): Constitutive Discourses of China's Identity**

Revolutionary Discourse	The Discourse of Relations with the Great Western powers	Realism Discourse	Globalism Discourse
1- Distrust of the West 2- Criticism of the Western International Order 3- Respond decisively to threats from the West 4- Anti-xenophobia	1- Optimistic about the West 2- Facing the threats posed by the West through interaction and compromise	Emphasis on increasing military and economic capability to face external threats	1- Emphasis on transnational cooperation to solve transnational challenges 2- Emphasis on internationalism and China's soft power to face external threats

Thus, how the intersubjective foundations that shape China's identity are interpreted and which identity discourse overcomes other discourses determine how the country faces external threats.

**Figure (4): Different Definitions of China's National Role**



### 5.Data Analysis

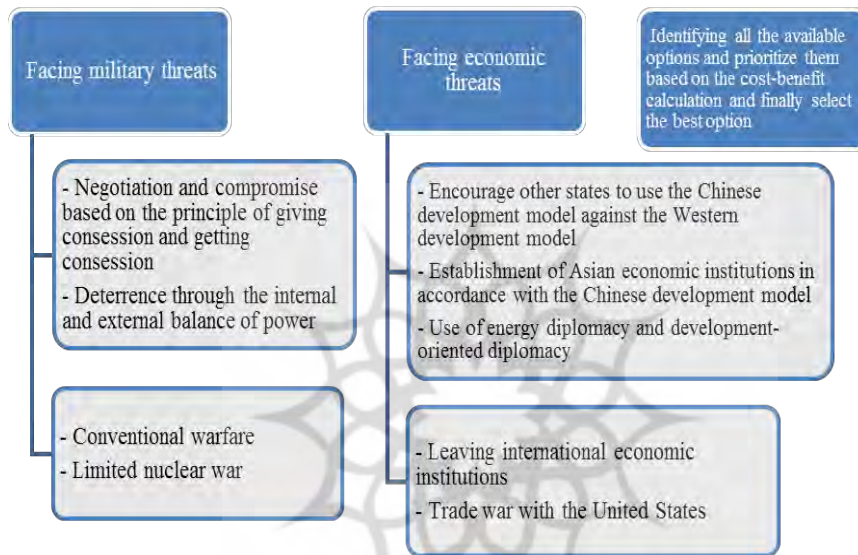
According to Hudson, there are many differences between "foreign policy study" and "foreign policy analysis." In fact, in his view, foreign policy analysis is a separate field related to the study of human decision-making in the social sciences (Hudson,2010:6). As stated, our purpose in this paper is not to study China's foreign policy, but to analyze its foreign policy in the face of foreign threats. In this section, we will analyze the data using modeling, and study how China faces external threats based on the theoretical foundations of the research.

#### 5-1. How China Faces External Threats based on the Rational Choice Model

Behaviorists and rational decision maker theorists, considering China as a rational actor, emphasize how Chinese leaders act in the face of external threats based on a rational actor model. According to these theories, Chinese leaders, in the face of external threats, prioritize the available options based on the calculation of profits and losses in order to maximize the desirability, and choose the most desirable option without any restrictions. For example, if the use of force causes China to

achieve the expected and desired results, they can use limited warfare, even in the nuclear form.

**Figure (5): Model 1: How China Deals with External Threats Based on the Rational Choice Model, A Model of Action Based on the Economic Human**



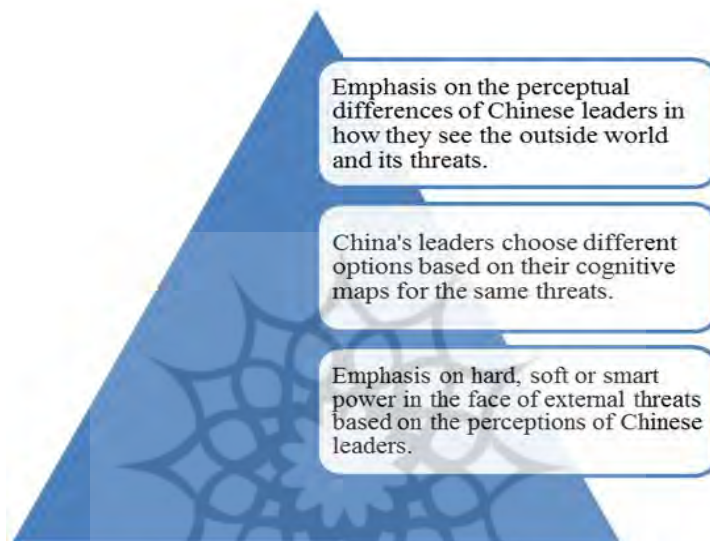
**5-2. How China Deals with External Threats based on Cognitive Approaches**

At this level of analysis, how to perceive threats and how to deal with them depends on the mental frameworks, ideas and perceptions that Chinese leaders have about their internal and external capabilities and national security policies.

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**Figure (6): Model 2: How China Responds to External Threats based on Cognitive Approaches, A Model of Action Based on the Psychological Human**



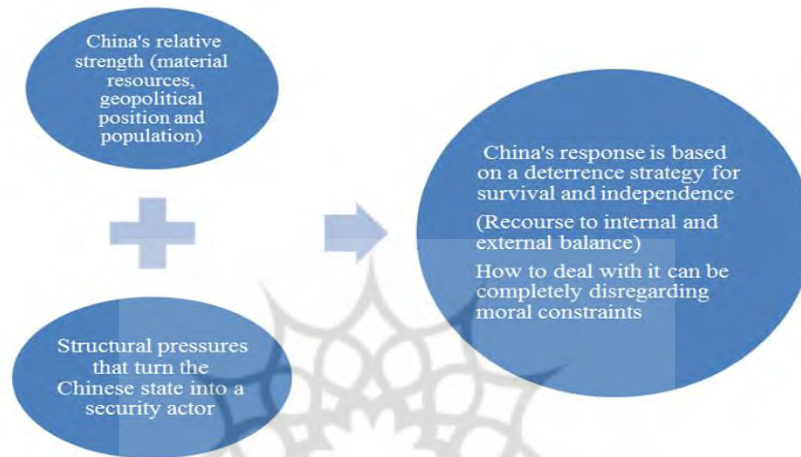
### **5-3. How China Deals with External Threats based on Structural Realism**

Considering China as a rational actor, structural realists focus on how this state behaves under the constraints imposed by the structure. For the Chinese state, they are a presumed identity and interests that are fixed and unchangeable. This identity has four basic components that are common to all states: sovereignty, rationality, vulnerability (the Chinese state should be concerned about threats to its physical security) and pessimism (assuming inside is safe and outside is threatening). These features offer a limited number of options for the Chinese state in the face of external threats:

- Military confrontation with external threats,
- Accord with others to balance and deal with the threat,
- In addition to the external balance, the Chinese state can also resort to the internal balance (increase internal capabilities).

External balance and internal balance are both in the direction of deterrence strategy based on rational choice model.

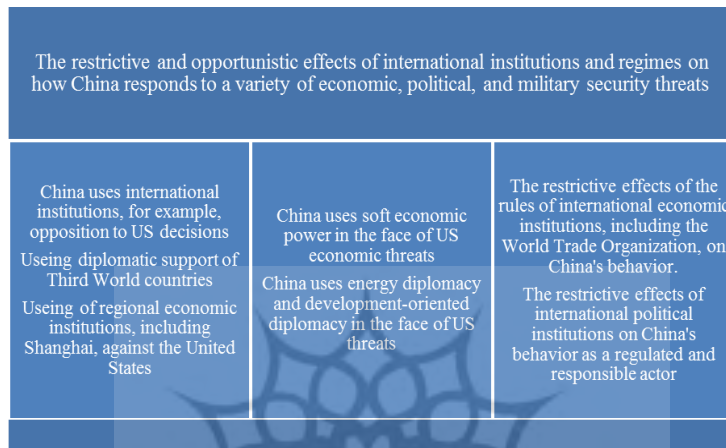
**Figure (7): Model 3: How China Deals with External Threats Based on the Structural Realism Approach. A Model of Action Based on the Security/Rational Human**



**5-4. How China Faces External Threats based on the Neoliberal Approach**

Neoliberal approaches, considering the Chinese state as a rational economic actor, focus on how the rules and institutions in the structure of the international system affect the way China responds to external threats. (Causal effects of international institutions and regimes on the behavior of the Chinese state). Therefore, in order to face external threats, China must pay attention to structural institutional constraints and act regularly. China, on the other hand, can use the opportunities that these institutions create for it as a rational actor. An example is China's extensive participation in international organizations and institutions, as well as the process of globalization, especially in the economic sphere, in order to increase its soft power and help reject the "Chinese threat" theory. In addition to these measures, China is promoting its economic model of development by establishing regional economic institutions in the face of US-led Western-based institutions.

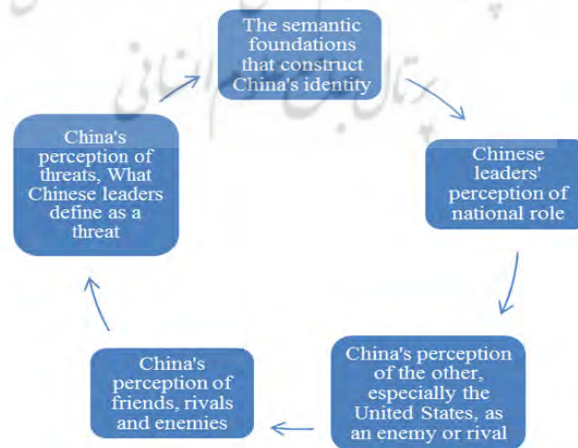
**Figure (8): Model 4: How China Deals with External Threats Based on the Neoliberal Approach. A Model of Action Based on the Economic Rational Human**



**5-5. How China Deals with External Threats based on a Constructivist Approach**

Constructivists examine how the Chinese state responds to external threats by focusing on the constructed identity that it has built for itself in the international system (how it perceives itself and others) as well as emphasizing the intersubjective and internal semantic foundations that construct Chinese's identity.

**Figure (9): Model 5: How China Deals with External Threats Based on a Constructivist Approach. A Model of Action Based on the Social Human**



Among the above approaches, the concept of “absolute rationality” is in rational decision making theories, structural realists and institutionalists (result-based behavior) and the concept of “relative rationality” is in cognitive approaches as well as constructivists, (appropriate- based behavior).

### **6. Conclusion**

It is natural that China, as an emerging and limited revisionist power, may face different geopolitical, economic, political, and international challenges, the most important of which, according to the author, have been the balancing act of the United States. In this regard, the Chinese leaders themselves believe that the shift of US foreign policy to the East has been aimed at controlling China's power and limiting it, especially in its periphery (China's Military Strategy, 2015).

The main problem of this study was not the identification of these threats but how China faced these threats from the two perspectives of macro level of analysis (international politics theories) and micro level of analysis (foreign policy analysis theories). By studying these theories and presenting proposed models, the results we obtained from this research include the following:

- A unipolar system will lead to the emergence of rival powers in the international system that any action by the hegemon to prevent the emergence of these emerging powers will become a security issue (Layne, 1993:45).
- According to Walt's theory of balance of threats (1987), as the process of China's empowerment increases, it is perceived as a greater threat by the United States as the hegemon of the international system. Thus, China will face more balancing and restrictive actions by the United States. These balancing actions may take place in different domains, such as US taxation of Chinese goods (in the domain of international trade) or its alliances with China's regional neighbors to counter China.
- Given China's empowerment in the international system, on the question of whether a new Cold War is possible between it and the United States, it can be said that from a realistic point of view and based on theories of "Balance of Power" and "Balance of Threats", it can be said that it is possible to create a new Cold War in the international system, but in terms of constructivist views and cognitive approaches, the kind of identity that Chinese leaders define for themselves in the international system and confrontation with the United States (Identity-based roles) has a direct impact on the possibility or impossibility of a new Cold War. Therefore, the prediction of this issue will be different based on different theoretical views.

- The different perceptions of Chinese leaders compared to Mao in changing or mixing Confucian ideas and values with socialist ideas in terms of "peaceful development", "new security", "harmonious world" and "common destiny" cause changes in how China has dealt with the outside world and has had direct impact on its security policies.
- Since Mao, Chinese leaders have taken a positive stance, recognizing the ineffectiveness of a negative view of security, especially in the post-bipolar world. They have sought to address security threats and challenges through participatory security (participation in the international community). In other words, in China's new security perspective, concepts such as globalization, economic interdependence, interaction with major powers, and international institutions and organizations are closely linked to the concept of security and confrontation with security threats.
- Finally, in recent years, the Chinese state has sought to address its security threats as a rational actor within the framework of international institutional rules and through the use of its intelligent power.

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