

THE RISE OF CHINA: THE TAIWAN QUESTION, THE BELT AND ROAD
INITIATIVE AND OFFENSIVE STRUCTURAL REALISM

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ABSTRACT

THE RISE OF CHINA: THE TAIWAN QUESTION, THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE AND OFFENSIVE STRUCTURAL REALISM

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Offensive structural realists try to predict and interpret the actions of states in the anarchical international system based on the characteristics of this system. According to them, a rising great power will start to behave aggressively and try to dominate its regions in order to augment its security. This thesis analyses the rise of China from an offensive structural realist perspective. It mainly focuses on offensive structural realists' arguments that rising China will try to be a regional hegemon. In this context, the relationship between China's military rise and economic rise, the Taiwan question, and the Belt and Road Initiative are examined in the thesis. Offensive structural realists' claims about the rising China are compared with official statements of China, the possible consequences of China's Taiwan policy and the Belt and Road Initiative, and facts about these cases.

Keywords: Rise of China, Offensive Structural Realism, The Taiwan Question, The Belt and Road Initiative, China's Military Modernization

ÖZ

ÇİN'İN YÜKSELİŞİ: TAYVAN SORUNU, KUŞAK VE YOL GİRİŞİMİ VE OFANSİF YAPISAL REALİZM

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Ofansif yapısal realistler, anarşik uluslararası sistemde devletlerin eylemlerini bu sistemin özelliklerine dayanarak tahmin etmeye ve yorumlamaya çalışırlar. Onlara göre yükselen bir büyük güç, güvenliğini artırmak için agresif davranmaya ve bölgesine hakim olmaya çalışacaklardır. Bu tez Çin'in yükselişini ofansif yapısal realist bir perspektiften analiz etmektedir. Tez temel olarak ofansif yapısal realistlerin yükselen Çin'in hegemon olmaya çalışacağına dair argümanlarına odaklanmaktadır. Bu bağlamda tezde Çin'in askeri yükselişi ile ekonomik yükselişi arasındaki ilişki, Tayvan sorunu ve Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi incelenmektedir. Ofansif yapısal realistlerin yükselen Çin hakkındaki iddiaları, Çin'in resmi açıklamalarıyla ve Çin'in Tayvan politikasının ve Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi'nin olası sonuçlarıyla ve bu vakalarla ilgili gerçeklerle karşılaştırılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çin'in Yükselişi, Ofansif Yapısal Realizm, Tayvan Sorunu, Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi, Çin'in Askeri Modernizasyonu

To My Beloved Family

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A2/AD	Anti-Access/Area-Denial
ASAT	Anti-Satellite Weapons
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CMC	Central Military Commission of the Communist Party of China
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics of China
NDRC	National Development and Reform Commission
IISS	The International Institute for Strategic Studies
INTERPOL	International Criminal Policy Organization
IR	International Relations
OBOR	One Belt, One Road
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSD	The Office of the Secretary of Defense
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLAAF	People's Liberation Army Air Force
PLASAF	People's Liberation Army Second Artillery Force
PLAN	The People's Liberation Army Navy
PRC	People's Republic of China
RMB	Renminbi
ROC	Republic of China (Taiwan)
SCIO	The State Council Information Office of China

SEZs	Special Economic Zones
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SLBM	Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile
SOEs	State-Owned Enterprises
TVEs	Township and Village Enterprises
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USD	United States Dollar
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“In the anarchic world of international politics, it is better to be Godzilla than Bambi.”
Mearsheimer, *China's Unpeaceful Rise*

I expect China to act the way the United States has acted over its long history. Specifically, I believe that China will try to dominate the Asia-Pacific region much as the United States dominates the Western Hemisphere. For good strategic reasons, China will seek to maximize the power gap between itself and potentially dangerous neighbors like India, Japan, and Russia. China will want to make sure that it is so powerful that no state in Asia has the wherewithal to threaten it. It is unlikely that China will pursue military superiority so that it can go on the warpath and conquer other countries in the region, although that is always a possibility. Instead, it is more likely that Beijing will want to dictate the boundaries of acceptable behavior to neighboring countries, much the way the United States makes it clear to other states in the Americas that it is the boss (Mearsheimer, 2010, p. 389).

The rise of China is an issue that has occupied the agenda of the social sciences for a long time. Many books and articles are being published, a considerable number of analyses are being prepared, and numerous official statements are being made on this issue. These studies include many academic disciplines, especially economics, sociology, political science, and business administration. International Relations is also one of these fields that the rise of China is examined intensively. The rise of China has been and continues to be studied with many International Relations theories and concepts. Offensive structural realism is probably the most pessimistic of these theories.

A passage from Mearsheimer's article *The Gathering Storm: China's Challenge to US Power in Asia* is shared above. This passage displays lots of aspects of offensive structural realist views on the rise of China. As is known, China is frequently accused of being undemocratic, having non-transparent governing practices, violating human rights, abusing the rights of minorities, not obeying the rule of law, intervening in the market, and ignoring intellectual property rights. However, offensive structural realists do not interest in these matters, and they do not involve them in their analyses. They have different reservations about China.

According to offensive structural realists, all states are the same in terms of their internal dynamics. For this reason, the fact that China is not a Western-style democracy does not make its behaviours different in international relations. Instead, they argue that the main factor that determines how states behave and will behave in international relations is power. Their places in the balance of power push states to follow disparate policies. This is why Mearsheimer (2010) claims that rising China will try to become a hegemon, as "Uncle Sam" has done in the past. This claim of Mearsheimer roots in some theoretical assumptions and, of course, historical examples. Offensive structural realism is a branch of structural realism. The common trait of structural realists is that they try to explain international politics through its anarchical nature at the systemic level (Labs, 1997; Pashakhanlou, 2018). They argue that the anarchic nature of the international system pushes states to maximize their power in order to maximize their security (Labs, 1997; Mearsheimer, 2001; Noguchi, 2011).

According to Mearsheimer (1994/95; 2001), the international system has an anarchical nature. The actors of this system are various states which have military power to harm each other. In this system, it is impossible for states to know the future behaviours of other states. The primary aim of all states is survival, and states are rational actors that try to increase their possibility of survival (Mearsheimer, 1994/95; 2001). Mearsheimer summarizes the features of this system with five basic assumptions called "Bedrock Assumptions" (Mearsheimer, 2001, p.30). When these

five assumptions come together, the states are pushed to think and act aggressively towards other states; thus, "...three general patterns of behavior result: fear, self-help, and power maximization" (Mearsheimer, 2001, p.32). This situation is summarized in *Figure 1.1*.

Bedrock Assumptions of Offensive Structural Realism

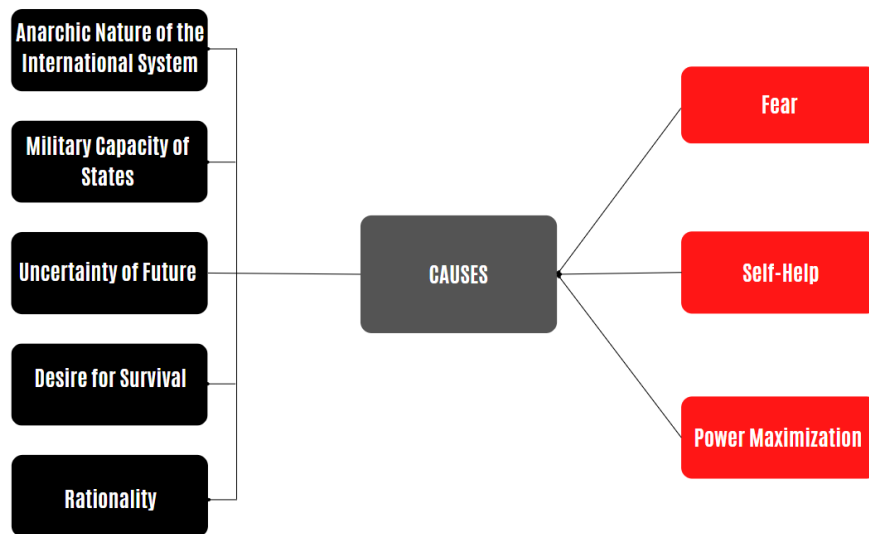


Figure 1. 1: Bedrock Assumptions of Offensive Structural Realism (Mearsheimer, 1994/95; Mearsheimer, 2001, “Anarchy and the Struggle for Power”)

In such a world, states fear, think rationally, and try to maximize their power in order to survive. In this respect, the strongest state in the system is also the safest state (Mearsheimer, 1994/95; 2001; Layne, 2002). This is the reason why offensive structural realism argues that all states want to be the hegemon (Mearsheimer, 1994/95; 2001; 2006b). The historical basis of this argument is that Nazi Germany,

the United States, and the Soviet Union, which were the rising powers in the past, tried to dominate other countries (Roy, 1994, p. 160; Fravel, 2010, pp. 506-507). In this respect, they argue that China, which has risen in its region, will behave aggressively like Imperial Germany, Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, and the Soviet Union (Mearsheimer, 2006b, p. 161) because the behaviour of states is determined by the rules of the system. In short, China is a rising great power, and there are some roles that the system has assigned to rising great powers. They should increase their power and capacity in order to augment their security. In this respect, according to the theory, China will (and should) behave as the rising great powers behaved in the past.

As also noted above, offensive structural realists' argument that rising China is seeking regional hegemony is based on some theoretical assumptions and historical examples. However, arguments of theories need to be tested in order to be accepted. As a matter of fact, offensive structural realism has also been tested many times, and the strengths and weaknesses of the theory have been repeatedly analysed. There is no theory that can explain every case in international relations. The dynamic nature of international relations will probably not allow this to also happen in the future. For this reason, offensive structural realism also cannot explain every case.

However, one of the main arguments of this theory is that every state wants to maximize its power in order to maximize its security because the most powerful state in the system is also the safest state of the system (Mearsheimer, 1994/95; 2001; Layne, 2002); and their desire for power ends only when they become the hegemon (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 34). This presumption is the backbone of the theory. China is a rising great power in the 21st century. Considering its long-term development momentum, increasing economic power, and full-scale military modernization programme, it can be said that the balance of power is changing in favour of China. This is an opportunity for offensive structural realist theory. The rise of China provides a unique precedent for analysing the theory's arguments that rising great powers become to follow more aggressive policies towards other countries, want to

change the balance of power in favour of themselves, and even seek hegemony. In this context, the main question of this thesis is whether rising China is trying to become a regional hegemon. In other words, whether China will become a regional hegemon thanks to its rise. Within the scope of the thesis, the offensive structural realists' arguments that rising China follow (or will follow) aggressive policies in order to become a regional hegemon will be analysed through the examples of China's foreign policy.

Trying to understand a state's grand strategy through a single foreign policy case probably will cause to make wrong conclusions, so this thesis will try to compare two policies of China in order to analyse these arguments. It is a well-known fact that realists are successful in explaining security and military-oriented policies. For this reason, the first case to be examined within the scope of the thesis is the Taiwan question. On the other hand, the arguments of realists regarding non-military power concepts are weak. For example, offensive structural realism reduces power to military power and latent power, and it considers non-military power elements to the extent that they can be converted into military power. In this context, the second case to be examined in the thesis is the Belt and Road Initiative, which is China's gigantic infrastructure project that promises hope for developing states. In short, the thesis aims to evaluate the purposes and possible consequences of these two policies in light of offensive realist theory. At this point, the thesis aims to contribute to realist literature by using its concepts and tools to analyse the Taiwan question and the Belt and Road Initiative in order to evaluate its arguments about rising great powers.

Political goals, current power and policies of states should be parallel to each other. Otherwise, the argument of offensive realists that states are rational actors will not be true. Therefore, China, which wants to be a hegemon and whose weight in the balance of power is increasing, should follow the necessary policies to increase its power in its region. At this point, the thesis aims to analyse these two cases in light of offensive structural realism and official claims of China. Both cases studied will be compared with each other. In this way, it will be analysed that the arguments of offensive

structural realists on the rise of China are compatible with reality. The basic logic of the research is given in *Figure 1.2*.

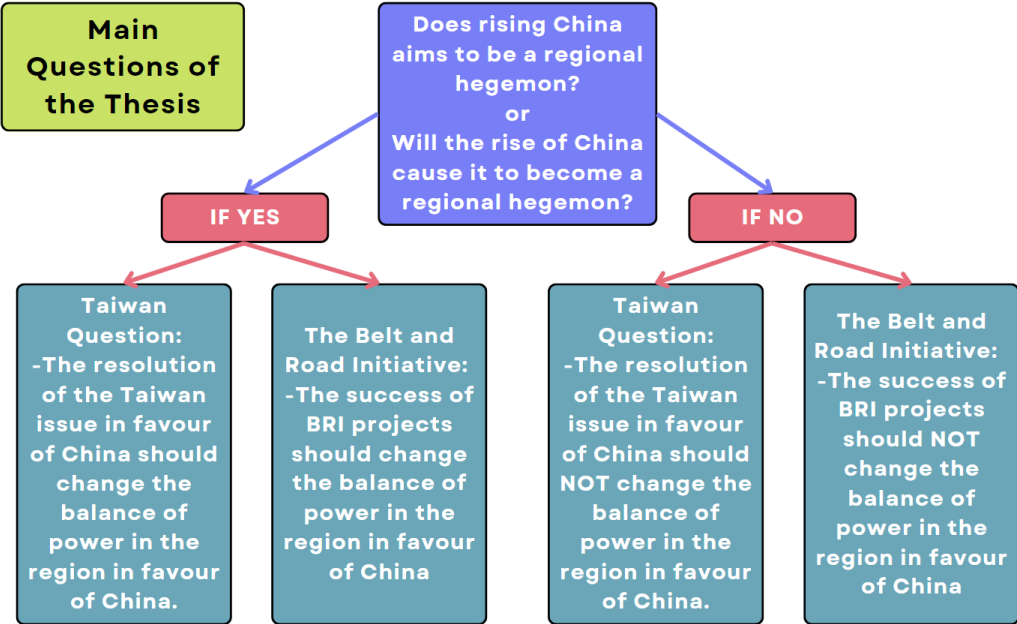


Figure 1. 2: Main Questions of the Thesis

Apart from arguments of offensive structural realists, the thesis also involves China's official statements, white papers and speeches by high-level government officials about China's economic rise, military modernization programme, Taiwan policy, the Belt and Road Initiative and political objectives of these policies and programmes. It is expected that analyses of China's official claims about its rise present counterarguments to offensive structural realist claims on the rise of China. At this

point, if China claims that its policies serve peaceful purposes and the possible consequences of these policies do not serve China's desire to become a regional hegemon, the arguments of the offensive realists that rising China will seek hegemony will be wrong; because, according to theory, policies of states and aims they pursue must be in parallel. In this regard, the thesis also aims to make a contribution to the literature by including China's official arguments and perception about its economic development, military modernisation, Taiwan policy and the BRI in the analysis.

The thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter is written to introduce research questions, the objectives of the study and the organization of the thesis. The second chapter begins by giving general information about the realist school of International Relations. The history of the realist school, the paradigm shifts in the school, the importance of the realist school for International Relations, and common assumptions accepted by all realist theories are mentioned. Then, it is explained how the different realist theories are classified within the realist school. This part is essential in limiting the offensive structural realism that will be used as the analysis tool in the thesis.

After that, classical realism is examined through the works of Morgenthau and Hobbes. Principles of political realism are mentioned, and the concept of power is explained within the framework of the theory. Anarchy and the balance of power concepts in the realist school, which are very critical concepts for structural realists, are examined in this part. Then, structural realism and its similarities and differences from classical realism are examined through the studies of Kenneth Waltz. In this part, especially power, anarchy and the balance and power concepts are emphasized. Offensive structural realism takes the concept of unlimited desire for power from classical realism and its systemic view from Waltzian realism. The main purpose of these two parts is to explain the background of the theoretical framework of offensive structural realism and to reveal its similarities and differences with the intellectual background on which the theory was fed.

In the following of this chapter, the differences and similarities between offensive structural realism and defensive structural realism are compared, and offensive structural realism is examined in detail. Five bedrock assumptions of the theory, the consequences of these assumptions in the system, and the concepts of anarchy, hegemony, security dilemma, and balance of power are clarified. Then, the arguments of offensive structural realism about the concept of power were evaluated. These arguments will be used repeatedly in the remainder of the thesis. In this part, the rationality of the state, ways of changing or protecting the balance of power mechanism, the stopping power of water, and the importance of the conventional armies, navy and air forces for military projection are also examined within the scope of the thesis. The chapter concludes with discussions of the lack of the balancer and the possibility of global hegemony in offensive structural realist literature. This part seeks answers to the questions of what offensive structural realism is, what are the main concepts and tools of the theory, and what are the similarities and differences between this theory and previous realist theories.

The third chapter begins by giving fundamental information about economic development and the current economy of China. The importance of economic power for building military power is also examined in the scope of offensive structural realism. Then, the historical background of the economic development of China is analysed. In this part of the chapter, it is aimed to clarify the developmental path of China through the differences between the Imperial era, the Communist era, and the post-Communist era. Later, the relationship between China's economic ascendance and military rise is examined. The military modernization of China, the main paradigm changes in the military administration of China, and its current military power are analysed. The effects of China's military rise on the international system are also analysed through offensive structural realism. This part explains the possible consequences of China's military rise for the system, the reason why China's military development is a threat to the hegemony of the United States, and why these analyzes are crucial to the rest of the thesis.

In the continuation of the third chapter, China's perception of the international system is analysed in light of its official claims and white papers. The aims of China's military modernization plan and elements that China sees as security threats are examined in line with the official view of China. Then, the possible measures that other states take against China's military rise are mentioned; and connections between this chapter and the rest of the thesis are explained.

This chapter aims to answer these questions: How China is rising economically? What is the relationship between China's economic development and military development? What are the aims and extent of China's military modernization plan? What are the main arguments of China and offensive structural realists about China's military modernization? Why is China's military modernization perceived as a threat by other states? What are the effects of China's military rise on the system and other states?

In the following two chapters, the relationship between China's military rise and its desire for hegemony will be discussed by focusing on the Taiwan question and Belt and Road Initiative cases. In this respect, the fourth chapter of the thesis starts with some basic information about Taiwan. Then, the historical background of the Sino-Taiwan division and the Taiwan question is evaluated in detail. Afterwards, the current situation of the Taiwan question, and the relationship between China and Taiwan are examined in the scope of the thesis. At this point, Taiwan and China's military power are also compared within the framework of China's military development. In this part, there are not only news and academic articles are used, but also the Republic of China's (Taiwan) white papers are used in order to clarify arguments of Taiwan about the Taiwan question and the rise of China. The importance of the United States on the Taiwan question is emphasized in these parts.

In the continuation of this chapter, China's claims about the Taiwan question are analysed through its white papers and official speeches. China's reunification policy is evaluated in terms of China's official claims, and the benefits of reunification for

China and Taiwan are examined through the arguments of China. Then, offensive structural realists' argument on China's military rise, its desire for hegemony and the connection of these arguments with the Taiwan question is evaluated. The effects of China's increasing military capacity on the Taiwan question, the strategic importance of Taiwan's main island for the mainland security of China and the power projection of the Chinese army, the possible offensive causes and consequences of reunification policy, the South China Sea problem and its relation with the Taiwan question, the possible consequences of solving the Taiwan problem in favour of China for China's neighbour countries, the US and other states in the system are analyzed. Then, the Taiwan question is examined in the light of offensive structural realism arguments that China wants to establish hegemony, considering China's official arguments about the question.

This chapter aims to answer what are the effects of the military rise of China on the Taiwan question, what are the official arguments of China and Taiwan on the Taiwan question, what are the importance of Taiwan for China's development, security and military projection, what are the arguments of offensive structural realists on Taiwan question, how the Taiwan policy of China serves its desire for hegemony, is China's reunification policy compatible to offensive structural realists' arguments that China seeks to hegemony.

In the fifth chapter, the case of the Belt and Road Initiative is evaluated. Firstly, the historical background, scopes, aims, content, and participants of the BRI are mentioned. Then, China's official discourses about the BRI are analysed. In this part, it is emphasized the meaning attributed to the BRI by China, the connection between the historical Silk Road and the BRI, the pillars of the initiative, and the benefits of the BRI projects for participating countries and the world according to China.

Afterwards, the reasons for the emergence of BRI policy are analysed from a strategic perspective. The importance of the initiative in terms of the growth momentum of the Chinese economy, the possible economic, political, strategic, security and military

benefits that the initiative will provide to China, the effects of the initiative on regional rivals of China and the United States, the importance of the initiative for coastal, trade, and energy security of China are evaluated through the literature and offensive structural realism. The chapter also briefly touches on the similarities in the aims of China's Taiwan and BRI policies.

This chapter aims to answer these questions: What is the Belt and Road Initiative? What are China's official claims about the aims and extent of the BRI? Does the BRI project essentially serve the interests of China, or does it seek to achieve common benefits for all participating states? What is the importance of the initiative to the economic and military rise and security of China? How could the BRI policy of China serve its desire for hegemony? Is this policy compatible with offensive structural realists' arguments that China seeks hegemony?

The sixth chapter is written as a conclusion in order to compare the findings which are reached in the thesis. In this chapter, the findings related to the military modernization of China, the Taiwan question and the Belt and Road Initiative are evaluated within the scope of the main questions of the thesis.

CHAPTER 2

THE REALIST SCHOOL

2.1. Realism and International Relations

There are many theories that exist in the International Relations field, but realism has a special place in the IR literature. If it is looked at the mainstream IR textbooks [e.g., *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations* (Baylis et al., 2011), *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches* (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013), *Theories of International Relations* (Burchill & Linklater, 2013), *International Relations: Perspectives, Controversies & Readings* (Shimko, 2014), etc.], it will be seen that the first theory examined in the International Relations theories chapters of these books is realism. The reason is that “realism is the dominant theory of International Relations” (Dunne & Schmidt, 2011, p. 85). Knowing the realist tradition is essential not only for understanding the realists' view of international politics but also for understanding the views of other International Relations theories on international politics. Nearly all International Relations theories include some contrasts to the realist paradigm. These theories formulate some of their ideas from their criticism of the realist paradigm.

The origin of realism goes back to Thucydides. Thucydides was an Athenian general, who lived between 460 and 390 BCE, and he wrote about the war between Athens and Sparta, which is called Peloponnesian War (Lebow, 2013, p. 60). The story of classical realism started with “Thucydides’ representation of power politics as a law of human behaviour” (Dunne & Schmidt, 2011, p. 89). Although the deep-rooted tradition of realism continues with philosophers like Machiavelli and Hobbes,

International Relations emerged as a scientific field after World War I (Pashakhanlou, 2017, p. 5). As emphasized by Korab-Karpowicz (2018), after World War I, the academic field of International Relations was dominated by liberal internationalists, who aimed to create international law mechanisms and establish international organizations to guarantee world peace. Although liberal internationalists have been criticized since the 1930s, they took the death blow with the outbreaking of World War II (Korab-Karpowicz, 2018).

In *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, E. H. Carr accused liberal internationalists of being utopians (Mearsheimer, 2005, p. 140; Korab-Karpowicz, 2018). Carr objected to the idealist tendency of liberal internationalists, which ignores the importance of power that is located at the heart of politics (Mearsheimer, 2005, pp. 140-141). Classical realism, which is also called human nature realism, became the hegemonic theory in the late 1940s, and studies of Morgenthau played a leading role in this ascendance (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 19).

The domination of classical realism has started to come to an end in American IR schools during the 1960s because of the scientific-behaviouralist revolution (Labs, 1997, p. 2). Feng and Ruizhuang (2006) argue that the scientific-behaviouralist revolution caused the International Relations discipline to transform into a more scientific discipline. The reason is that human nature lies at the heart of classical realism, and it is impossible to observe human nature (Feng & Ruizhuang, 2006). After these developments, structural realism became the dominant paradigm within the realist tradition (Labs, 1997, p. 2).

Structural realism has generally been identified with the seminal book of Kenneth N. Waltz, whose name is *Theory of International Politics*. Unlike classical realists, Waltz started from the international structure to understand international politics, not from human nature (Waltz, 1979). Economics is generally accepted as the most scientific discipline among the social sciences. In this respect, Waltz used scientific methods of economics to theorize his perspective of International Relations; in his

book, Waltz created analogies between Economics and International Relations by borrowing many concepts from Economics (Waltz, 1979).

Of course, realism is not the single theory of International Relations. Especially after the 1980s, new theories have started to enter the International Relations literature. These theories have contributed lots of things to the existing literature. They provide many new tools to understand different aspects of international politics which are ignored by traditional International Relations theories. However, Tickner's critique of International Relations is still partially valid: "International politics is a man's world, a world of power and conflict in which warfare is a privileged activity" (Tickner, 1988, p. 429). It has been decades since Tickner wrote that sentence. Many things have changed in the world. The Berlin Wall was demolished; the Cold War ended; the World Wide Web was invented; the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics collapsed; Francis Fukuyama wrote his seminal book which name is *The End of History and the Last Man*. Barack Obama, one of the former presidents of the United States, visited Cuba during his presidency. Donald J. Trump, the former president of the United States, met with Kim Jong Un, who is the leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Greta Thunberg, who is an environmental activist, made a great speech at the United Nations Climate Action Summit. Women have started to be more active in international politics; Angela Merkel ruled The Federal Republic of Germany for over 15 years, and Kamala Harris has become the new vice president of the United States. In the shadow of all these promising events, some things have not changed in international politics: The positions of power and security. Great powers still conflict with each other for their interests. States still procure new weapons to threaten other states. There are still bloody wars in the world. The world is still made up of states that fear each other, and international politics is still realist. For all these reasons, realism has still reflected the reality of international politics.

Realism is not a single theory; it has various subbranches (Feng & Ruizhuang, 2006, p. 109). However, different schools of realism agree on some common assumptions. According to one of the well-known realist scholars Robert G. Gilpin (1984), three

common points are adopted by all realist schools. The first of these assumptions is that international affairs are inherently conflictual (Gilpin, 1984, p. 290). “Anarchy is the rule; order, justice, and morality are exceptions” (Gilpin, 1984, p. 290). For realists, the international system is anarchic, but anarchy does not mean chaos; instead, anarchy means that there is no central authority above states in international politics (Layne, 1994, p. 11; Mearsheimer, 1994/95, p. 10; Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 30; Dunne & Schmidt, 2011, p. 87; Bell, 2017, p. 2). In the anarchic world, states cannot guarantee their survival, so all states should ensure their own security; realists call this principle the self-help system (Dunne & Schmidt, 2011, p. 87).

According to Gilpin (1984), the second common assumption of all realist schools is about units in the political sphere. According to realism, units of international relations are groups, not individuals or classes. Humans live in groups which conflict with other groups to share limited resources. In today’s world, these units have taken the form of nation-states (Gilpin, 1984, p. 290). States are autonomous entities for realists, and these units try to follow their own interests, which are called national interests (Kirshner, 2009, p. 36). At this point, it is crucial to explain the difference between interest and national interest. As explained by Arnold Wolfers (1952), national interest does not represent the interests of particular groups, individuals, or politicians; it represents the interest of a nation as a whole. National interest is more important than other types of interests for states (Wolfers, 1952, p. 481). It means that realist scholars, excluding some neoclassical realists, are not interested in domestic policy-making processes that are influenced by different interest groups. They neither see political outputs as a process that is shaped by the clash of interests of different groups, nor a process that serves only the interest of dominant classes. For realists, national interests are determined by impartial and rational politicians who do not favour any part of their societies.

The third common assumption of all realist schools is about the supremacy of power and security notions (Gilpin, 1984, pp. 290-291). However, realists have not agreed

on the meanings of these notions. For this reason, it will mention these concepts again in the relevant parts of this chapter.

As explained above, the realist tradition sees international politics as a dangerous jungle where states must protect themselves with their own capacities. Realists are generally pessimistic about “moral progress” (Gilpin, 1984, p. 290) in international politics. These things which were mentioned above may not be consistent with the moral values of modern humans. People might think that leaders do not act according to these patterns. Although leaders act as realists, they hide their real motivation from their citizens, and they try to attribute moral meanings to their realist acts (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 22-23) because “Realism is a hard sell” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 23). Societies will probably not approve of the cruel decisions made by politicians.

Although schools of realism agree on these issues that are mentioned above, they have different opinions on many topics. These differentiations create various analysis models, processes, and methods; and cause the emergence of disparate expectations on international political outcomes. Thanks to these differences, various realist theories have emerged. Before examining the different schools of the realist tradition, it is necessary to clarify how these schools were classified.

2.2. Classification of Realist Theories

As stated above, realism is not a single theory. There are many different realist theories that have different focal points (Feng & Ruizhuang, 2006). International Relations textbooks generally prefer to divide realism into classical realism, neo-realism, and neoclassical realism. This distinction is made by considering the level of analysis of these theories. However, each of these different variants of realism has many distinct sub-branches. Moreover, considering levels of analysis of theories is not the only way to classify them (Feng & Ruizhuang, 2006, p. 11).

Liu Feng and Zhang Ruizhuang published *The Typologies of Realism*, an important article on the classification of realist theories, in 2006. In this article, Feng and Ruizhuang emphasized four different types of classifications of realism. The first classification is based on the “unit of analysis and independent variables” (Feng & Ruizhuang, 2006, p. 112). In respect of this classification, the realist theory is divided into three. The first one is human nature realism, which argues that the essence of politics is based on cruel human nature. The second one is state-centric realism which focuses on individual state behaviours to explain international relations. State-centric realism does not approach states as black boxes or billiard balls. It tries to include the internal dynamics of individual states in its analyses. The third one is system-centric realism which concentrates anarchic condition of international politics to understand the behaviours of states (Feng & Ruizhuang, 2006).

The second classification, which is based on dependent variables, divides realism into the theory of international politics and the theory of foreign policy (Feng & Ruizhuang, 2006, p. 113). According to Taliaferro (2000), this distinction is one of the major controversies among contemporary realists. While neorealism (also known as structural realism) tries to understand international outcomes that are caused by two or more international actors, neoclassical realism aims to explain individual states’ foreign policy decisions (Taliaferro, 2000).

According to Feng and Ruizhuang (2006), the third classification, which rests on a theoretical base, is based on a question: Do states seek to gain more power or achieve more security? This division creates offensive and defensive poles of realism that have different answers to the question of how much power a state should have. For defensive realists, the most important aim of states is to ensure their security; states acquire the power to reach this aim. Offensive realists also argue that power is a means to reach aims, but at the same time, receiving more power is another primary aim of states (Feng & Ruizhuang, 2006). These debates take place separately within the neorealist and neoclassical realist paradigms (Taliaferro, 2000). However, there is no clear borderline between neorealism and neoclassical realism; the works of a

scholar may be close to both of these theories (Taliaferro, 2000). This situation causes great confusion in the realist literature. For example, although Eric Labs' theory of war aims was classified as a neoclassical offensive realist by Taliaferro (Taliaferro, 2000, p. 135), Elman argues that Eric Labs is an offensive structural realist (Elman, 2004, p. 563). Taliaferro also classified Randall Schweller as an offensive structural realist (Taliaferro, 2000, p. 135). However, Feng and Ruizhuang argue that, according to the general opinion in the literature and Schweller's own claims, Randall Schweller is a neoclassical realist (Feng & Ruizhuang, 2006, p. 127). There are many examples of such confusion in the literature. Moreover, these confusions do not only occur between neorealism and neoclassical realism. Unfortunately, there is no clear way to classify scholars' International Relations views. The views of scholars can be evaluated on the basis of many different theories.

International Relations scholars feed their theoretical orientation from different sources. Even though we can see the works of the same authors in the bibliography of the studies of different scholars; these scholars may create different theoretical bases. As a matter of fact, the effects of Hobbes and Morgenthau are evident in the works of both Waltz and Mearsheimer. Moreover, Waltz's influence on Mearsheimer's work is very obvious. Although Mearsheimer starts from Waltzian view of the anarchic structure, he reached different consequences from Waltzian realism. The same assumptions may be the root of different theories in International Relations literature.

The fourth possible classification of realist theories specified by Feng and Ruizhuang (2006) is based on the type of international system; according to this classification, realism can be divided into the balance of power realism and hegemonic realism. However, the fourth classification does not present a clear distinction between realist schools because it is too extensive (Feng & Ruizhuang, 2006).

In this thesis, offensive structural realism¹ will be used as the theoretical background to examine the rise of China. In this respect, offensive structural realism will be examined in detail within the scope of the thesis. However, offensive structural realism is not a theory which discrete from other realist traditions. The roots of offensive structural realism are not only lay on classical realism but also lay on structural realism. Moreover, Kenneth Waltz is considered the leading theorist of structural realism; and Waltzian realism is also known as defensive realism. Because of that, it can be argued that offensive structural realism is also based on structural realism to a certain extent. Like offensive structural realism, defensive structural realism is derived from classical realism. In this respect, it is crucial to explain classical realism to understand its relations with Waltzian realism and offensive structural realism.

2.3. Classical Realism and Morgenthau

There are many authors who are classified as classical realists in the literature. Although these authors agree on many points, they make different emphases on some points. However, this section aims to explain classical realism through Morgenthau's political realism. Political realism of Morgenthau is classified as human nature realism or classical realism in IR literature, and he is also one of the first authors to come to mind when classical realism is mentioned, but it is another reason why Morgenthau is examined in this part of the thesis. Waltz's defensive realism and Mearsheimer's offensive realism feed on Morgenthau's political realism at many points, but at the same time, many aspects of Morgenthau's political realism were criticized by these theories. Therefore, while classical realism is examined in this section, the works of Morgenthau will be at the centre.

Morgenthau (1985) argues that there are two different conflictual poles that have different ideas about human nature in the history of political thought. The first pole

¹ According to classifications by Feng & Ruizhuang (2006), offensive structural realism can be classified as system-centric realism, neorealism and offensive realism.

argues that goodness rules human nature and a political order that is based on rationality and morality can be achieved. In order to achieve rational standards on the social order, humankind must cope with the problem of knowledge deficiency and dispose of the detrimental effects of morally corrupt groups and outmoded institutions. However, the second pole argues that the world is not a flawless place, and defective features of the world reflect human nature. According to them, the moral-political order, which is argued by the first pole, cannot be achieved. The interests of different individuals or groups clash, and the best solution to avoid conflicts is to redress the balance between these clashing interests. This second pole is called realism (Morgenthau, 1985, pp. 3-4). As mentioned above, Morgenthau starts to theorize his view with the assumption of human nature is demonian. In this context, the starting point of Morgenthau's theory is in stark contrast to the Liberals' arguments.

Morgenthau's political realism is based on six principles which were summarized in the first chapter of *Politics Among Nations*, and this section of the book is crucially important to understand his theoretical orientation.²

According to the first principle, “political realism believes that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature” (Morgenthau, 1985, p. 4). Human nature is immutable, and trying to change or ignore this nature will have devastating consequences for humankind (Morgenthau, 1985, p. 4). However, the immutability of human nature does not mean that there is no possible development in the social area. In order to make progress in society, we must understand and not deny human nature, which will always affect political life (Morgenthau, 1985, p. 4).

The second principle focuses on the importance of the concept of power for realists. If we identify political realism with a building, “the concept of interest defined as

² This section was not included in the first edition of the book, Morgenthau added this section with the second edition (Cristol, 2009, p. 238).

power” is the foundation of that building (Morgenthau, 1985, p. 5). According to Morgenthau (1985), political realism supposes that politicians act in accordance with the concept of interest defined as power. This presupposition makes it possible for political realism to understand the actions of politicians in history, and also to predict their future behaviours (Morgenthau, 1985, pp. 4-6). Morgenthau (1985) also emphasized that political realism is aware that politicians cannot always act rationally. However, political realism has to ignore this truth in order to be a theory (Morgenthau, 1985). One of the assumptions that allow political realism to make predictions is the assumption of rationality. If the theory does not ignore that politicians may act irrationally, future actions of states become unpredictable for the theory; because political decisions that are detrimental to the states’ interest will be included in possible political outcomes of states’ acts.

There is also a point that should not be ignored: The normative side of the theory. Morgenthau (1985) emphasized that political realism is a theory that not only says what it is but also what it should be. Politics also contains many irrational elements that affect states’ foreign policy outputs. Nevertheless, political realism excludes these elements from the theory; hence, its theoretical presuppositions about foreign policy are too rational to be true. After all, in terms of political realism, the best foreign policy is the most rational foreign policy; because only rational foreign policy outputs can maximize the self-interest of states and reduce the risks that states may face due to their foreign policy decision (Morgenthau, 1985, p. 10). Morgenthau is aware that foreign policy outputs that are envisaged by political realism do not completely match with the states’ real foreign policy outputs. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, this is not a deficiency but a necessity for the theory. Showing the true face of international relations is not the single aim of political realism; it also tries to present a guidebook that shows the path to the best foreign policy outputs.

According to the third principle of political realism, the “. . . concept of interest defined as power is an objective category which is universally valid” (Morgenthau, 1985, p. 10). However, there is no single definition of the concepts of power and

interest. States may have many different interests depending on time and place. This situation is the same for the concept of power. The concept of power includes all kinds of means, from constitutional power to brute force, that serve a person's domination over other people (Morgenthau, 1985, pp. 10-11). Morgenthau's political realism does not offer narrow definitions for the concepts of power and interest; rather, the scope of these concepts has been left as wide as possible (Williams, 2004).

The fourth principle of political realism is concerned with the relationship between politics and morality. Morgenthau (1985) emphasizes that the tension between moral obligations and desirable political decisions should not be ignored. In this context, he argues that individuals and states have different moral obligations. States have no right to sacrifice themselves in order to abide by moral obligations under any circumstances. They are responsible for protecting their citizens. In this context, states must act cautiously; prudence is the greatest virtue for political realism (Morgenthau, 1985, pp. 12-13).

According to the fifth principle of political realism, Morgenthau (1985) emphasizes that political realism denies the existence of universal moral criteria that can be used to measure the moral legitimacy of state behaviours. All nations find a way to legitimize their behaviour according to their moral context. For these reasons, the behaviours of states should be evaluated in light of power and interest concepts. This is the only possible way to evaluate states' behaviours objectively and fairly (Morgenthau, 1985, p. 13).

In the sixth principle of political realism, Morgenthau (1985) highlights that political realism asserts that the political field is autonomous from other fields. Human nature has different forms, such as political man, economic man, etc. If the political man is to be examined, it should be abstracted from other forms of human nature, because every aspect of human nature has its own standards and criteria (Morgenthau, 1985, pp. 13-16).

The notion of power has a crucial place in realist literature. According to classical realism, “intuitively, states with more power stand a better chance of surviving than states with less power” (Dunne & Schmidt, 2011, p. 87). According to Morgenthau, “international politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power. Whatever the ultimate aims of international politics, power is always the immediate aim” (Morgenthau, 1985, p. 31). According to classical realist theory, states need power to reach their aims. Unlike structural realism, according to classical realism, states' desire for power is not a crop of dynamics of the international system; this desire originates from human nature. Morgenthau (1947) says the following phrases to explain the infinity of human's desire for power:

. . .the selfishness of man has limits; his will to power has none. For while man's vital needs are capable of satisfaction, his lust for power would be satisfied only if the last man became an object of his domination, there being nobody above or beside him, that is, if he became like God (Morgenthau, 1947, p. 165).

However, Morgenthau (1947) emphasizes that individuals' desire for power is limited by society. This restriction encourages human beings to search for power through states. This desire is coded to the purposes of the state. Unlike their citizens, there is no power above states that limits their desire for power. This desire may only be limited by the balance of power mechanism (Morgenthau, 1947, pp. 168-169).

As mentioned above, human beings' desire for power is limited by the internal dynamics of the state. The state is an entity which has sanction power over its citizens; it is the rule-maker of the society; it sets, controls, and enforces the rules. Because of the superiority of the state above everything, the domestic political environment is not anarchic. However, this situation is not the same in the international sphere. There is no authority over states that controls and limits them. The international system is usually likened to the state of nature, which represents the anarchical environment of pre-state periods' societies, by realists. In order to explain this analogy, it may be helpful to mention the state of nature of Hobbes.

Thomas Hobbes' classic book *Leviathan*, which was written in the mid-17th century, has always been a guide for realists. In his book, Hobbes deals with topics of the

nature of man, the state of law, the state, and politics. The thirteenth chapter of the book focuses on the evil nature of human beings and the pre-historical times, in which human beings did not escape their evil nature by transferring their rights to an authority (Hobbes, 1998, pp. 82-86). Hobbes begins this chapter with an argument: "Nature hath [has] made men so equal, in the faculties of the body, and mind" (Hobbes, 1998, p. 82). According to Hobbes, equality between people's capacities leads to distrust among people. Thanks to this equality they have an equal chance to achieve their goals. In order to be secure, a human should dominate other people until there is no threat to himself and this behaviour of human beings is regarded as completely legitimate (Hobbes, 1998, pp. 82-83). Hobbes' claim that humans want to dominate other people until they are no longer threatened is similar to Morgenthau's claims about the unlimited power desire of humankind.

Thomas Hobbes dwells on the conflictual nature of humankind in several parts of his book. According to Hobbes, "out of civil states, there is always war of every one against every one" (Hobbes, 1998, p. 84). Hobbes (1998) claims that this situation results in undesirable consequences for human beings. Because of this anarchic situation, humankind is always in danger, and the future is not clear for them (Hobbes, 1998, p. 84). Hobbes (1998) continues with these sentences:

To this war of every man against every man, this also is consequent; that nothing can be unjust. The notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice have there no place. Where there is no common power, there is no law: where no law, no injustice. Force, and fraud, are in war the two cardinal virtues (Hobbes, 1998, p. 85).

Hobbes also claims that everybody has the right to do whatever they want in the state of nature (Hobbes, 1998, pp. 86-87). Nobody is safe in a universe where everyone tries to do what they want (Hobbes, 1998, pp. 86-87), and they can achieve success in their goals according to their power. However, it is unlikely that a person dominates all people who pose a threat to him. As Hobbes (1998) argued, in order to escape from terrible human nature, humankind must transfer their rights to one person or a group. At the end of this transfer, the state, *the Leviathan*, is founded (Hobbes, 1998, p. 114).

When it is looked at from this perspective, we see that Hobbes' state of nature is similar to the international sphere. There is no authority above the state which limits their actions. States want to be the most powerful state to feel secure. Since there is no authority in the international arena, everyone is in conflict with everyone. States are always faced with various threats; they are always in a state of nature.

The hierarchical political system of the domestic sphere limits the selfishness of human nature (Donnelly, 2013, p. 33). However, this situation is not valid for the international sphere, which is anarchic. Donnelly (2013) makes an interesting claim at this juncture. One of the reasons for the continuation of anarchy in international relations is that the internal structure of states is not anarchic. Even weak states are able to protect the lives of their citizens. Human beings do not have a strong desire to overcome the state of nature in the international arena because they do not face the state of nature in the domestic sphere (Donnelly, 2013, p. 36). In short, people's escape from anarchy at the state level has supported to ossification of anarchy at the international level.

It is very important to establish and maintain peace in this anarchic world, which is not ruled by a single omnipotent world state. Morgenthau (1985) highlights two different instruments that may maintain peace; the balance of power mechanism and normative limitations like international law and norms. However, both of these instruments are not able to maintain peace forever (Morgenthau, 1985, p. 27). If a realist has to make a choice between these two instruments, they will select the balance of power mechanism without hesitation. Because, as Hobbes says, there is no law in the state of nature (Hobbes, 1998, p. 85), and states are always in a state of nature.

As emphasized by Donnelly (2013), Realists claim that a powerful state may violate an international legal rule or moral norm. A state complies with international law and norms generally when the rules serve the state's own national interest or when the state is afraid of the reaction or sanctions of other states in case of violation. The state,

which sets its mind to violate a rule or norm, can be only deterred by the power of other states (Donnelly, 2013, p. 50). Therefore, realists focus on the balance of power concept, which seems to be a better option. They do not trust international law and institutions, which they regard as puppets of powerful states in the international sphere.

Individuals and groups form alliances to protect themselves from their counterparts in domestic politics. States also form alliances in the international area because of the same motivations (Lebow, 2013, p. 64). The balance of power concept is used to describe the situation, in which power is almost equally distributed between various groups of states (Morgenthau, 1985, p. 187). According to Morgenthau (1985), the international system is composed of many states that want to maintain or challenge the status quo. The desire for power of these states necessitates the balance of power mechanism and implementation of policies that are needed to protect the balance of power in the system (Morgenthau, 1985, p. 187). Realists' confidence in the balance of power mechanism in respect of its efficiency in promoting and maintaining peace comes from the assumption that two groups of states which have nearly equal powers will not fight.

As noticed by Thucydides in the aftermath of the Peloponnesian War, the main cause of wars is that one actor becomes more powerful than other actors; the shifting of the balance of power in favour of Athens prompted Spartans and its allies to fight against Athens in order to balance Athens' power (Forde, 1992, p. 374; Dunne & Schmidt, 2011, pp. 90-91). In contrast, the balance of power also may be the main cause of the wars. According to Lebow's (2013) analysis about Morgenthau, Morgenthau argues that if other actors of the system show that they have enough power to counter the revisionist threat and they do not hesitate to go to war; an outbreak of war may be avoided. However, the motivations and powers of states cannot be determined precisely. Therefore, balancing attempts can also lead to conflicts and even wars. Despite all, the balance of power is a mechanism that sometimes prevents wars,

enables small states to survive in the system, and reduces the effects of war even when it becomes unsuccessful in preventing wars (Lebow, 2013, p. 64).

The importance of the works of Morgenthau to realist literature cannot be denied. His books are still examined and criticized by lots of realists and inspire a lot of International Relations scholars. However, as mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the dominant position of classical realism in the realist paradigm was replaced by structural realism because of the behaviouralist-cognitive revolution. It was impossible to observe human nature (Feng & Ruizhuang, 2006). Instead, realists became interested in the international system. Although they classified Rousseau under structural realism; like other scholars, Dunne & Schmidt also argues that structural realism³ "officially" emerged after the publishing of Kenneth Waltz's seminal work, *Theory of International Politics*, in 1979 (Dunne & Schmidt, 2011, pp. 89-90). In his works, Waltz criticized Morgenthau and other classical realists many times. At the same time, his theory was based on his criticisms of classical realism at some point.

2.4. Waltzian Realism: Defensive Face of Neorealism

Theory of International Politics is one of the most important books in the field of International Relations. Probably, Waltz selected the title of the book consciously to give clues about his International Relations perspective. Waltz (1990) claims that previous realists did not go beyond to create some concepts. Although Morgenthau aimed to create a theory of international politics at the beginning, he created only some concepts, not an embracive theory (Waltz, 1990, pp. 25-26); because his appreciation of the role of the accidental and the occurrence of the unexpected in politics dampened his theoretical ambition” (Waltz, 1988, p. 615). However, Waltz's

³ Waltz's theory is also called defensive realism in literature. However, if it is looked at the literature, we see that one branch of neoclassical realists is also called defensive realists. In this respect, it was preferred to classify Waltz as a structural defensive realist to avoid terminological confusion in this thesis.

aim was to create a theory of international politics (Waltz, 1979). Probably, for these reasons, the name of the book is *Theory of International Politics*.

Waltz argued that exceptions or accidental events are not a problem for neorealists to create an international political theory (Waltz, 1988, p. 615; Waltz, 1990, p. 26) because “theory obviously cannot explain the accidental or account for unexpected events; it deals in regularities and repetitions and is possible only if these can be identified” (Waltz, 1988, p. 615).

Classical realists also could not formulate international politics as an autonomous field (Waltz, 1988, p. 615). Morgenthau separated politics from other fields, but he did not do the same thing for international politics (Waltz, 1988, p. 615; Waltz, 1990, p. 26). According to Waltz, although all fields are related to each other, a theory should examine a field separately from other fields (Waltz, 1988, p. 615; Waltz, 1990, p. 26). Neorealism makes it possible to develop a theory in this field by separating international politics from other fields (Waltz, 1988, pp. 615-616).

Waltz named his article, in which he claims that classical realists do not form a complete theory, *Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory*. This name reflects his ideas about political realism. As mentioned above, Waltz argues that realism has a thought, but neorealism has a theory.

The points that differentiate neorealism from classical realism are not limited to these differences. According to Waltz (1990), “neorealism produces a shift in causal relations, offers a different interpretation of power, and treats the unit level differently” (Waltz, 1990, p. 32). Waltz (1990) argues that the most important difference between neorealism and classical realism is their points of view on causal relations (Waltz, 1990, p. 32).

Waltz (1990) stated that classical realists have an inductive approach. According to them, there are many states that interact with each other in the world, and these

different states have their policies. In this respect, classical realists want to understand international outcomes based on the behaviours of these interacting units. As emphasized by Waltz (1990), classical realists mention human nature, power, and the dilemma about moral issues; and they offer us some tools to evaluate the decisions of politicians. Classical realists focus on different aspects of states' foreign policies. They make unit-level analyses, and their analyses do not include the impact of international structure on units. In this context, there is a one-way route from interacting units to international outcomes. Waltz criticizes classical realism because they do not consider changes in the dynamics of the international sphere when they consider changes in the behaviours of units and international outcomes (Waltz, 1990, pp. 32-34).

According to Waltz (1990), the unit-level analysis of traditional realism is not enough to understand international politics. Effects of structure should also be involved in the analysis. A theory should focus on the causes at both the unit level and the system level to be sensitive to changes and continuities in the system. Neorealism argues that the reasons for the causes of international outputs not only lay on the unit level but also lay on the structural level. At this point, there is a two-way causality (Waltz, 1990, pp. 33-34). This is the reason why neorealism is sensitive to changes and continuities in the system.

The other main difference between classical realism and neorealism derives from their different perspectives on the concept of power (Waltz, 1990). Waltz emphasizes that classical realists believe that people want to have unlimited power because of their nature. In this respect, gaining as much power as possible is a goal for human beings (Waltz, 1990, pp. 34-35). As detailed in the previous section, Morgenthau (1947) argues that "...the selfishness of man has limits; his will to power has none" (Morgenthau, 1947, p. 165). Classical realists allege that states' desire for power stems from the human race's primitive power desire. However, it is impossible to prove this claim scientifically.

As Waltz (1990) points out, Neorealists see power as a necessary tool to ensure security. It is dangerous for states to desire unlimited power because excessive armament of a state can frighten other states and cause them to be armed in the same way. Moreover, these states may form alliances against the state, which is excessively strengthening (Waltz, 1990, p. 36).

According to Waltz (1990), the last main difference between classical realism and neorealism is their different views on anarchy. Classical realists see anarchy as a condition that creates some problems that states have to deal with. However, for neorealists, the structure makes states functionally identical; differences among states are due to the distribution of power in the system (Waltz, 1990, p. 36). “Structure designates a set of constraining conditions” (Waltz, 1979, p. 73). It affects the behaviours of the actors in the system (Waltz, 1979, p. 74). In order to understand state behaviours, it must be looked at the structure, not the evil nature of humankind.

Like classical realists, Waltz (1979) also emphasizes that domestic politics and international politics have totally different ordering principles. There is a hierarchy in the domestic sphere, and there are actors that fulfil different tasks that are bound to an authority (Waltz, 1979, p. 88). As mentioned above, realists emphasize that, in the domestic system, actors are controlled by a central authority that is superior to all of these actors. These authorities are states that have the power to establish rules and impose sanctions in case of violations. However, “international systems are decentralized and anarchic” (Waltz, 1979, p. 88); there is no higher authority that has the power to give orders to units (states) and regulate the system (Waltz, 1979, p. 88).

At this point, it can be asked how the structure of the international system emerged. Waltz got help from macroeconomics to explain the emergence of the system. According to the analysis of Waltz (1979), markets consist of the actions of units that are following their own interests. Individual units do not consciously interact with other units in order to establish a system. Like the firms that constitute the markets

unconsciously, interactions of states also create a self-help system. The results are completely independent of the goals (Waltz, 1979, p. 91-95).

As mentioned above, the international structure influences state behaviours; it limits the behaviours of states and directs these states to specific behavioural patterns. According to Waltz (1979), one of the patterns of behaviours that the international structure create is self-help. Waltz (1979) argues that the right to use force is monopolized by the state in domestic political systems. Because of this situation, citizens do not need to defend themselves with their own abilities. Therefore, there is no self-help system in the domestic political sphere. However, according to Waltz (1979), states are alone in the international system. There is no such authority that protects states from other states. Consequently, the units need to ensure their own survival in the international system (Waltz, 1979, pp. 103-105). States, which are superior to everything in domestic politics, are always potential prey and hunter in the international arena (Mearsheimer, 1994/95, p. 10; Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 30-31).

Although states may have many different types of objectives, their first aim is survival; because survival is the precondition of all other aims (Waltz, 1979, pp. 91-92). States must rely on their power to ensure their survival and protect their interest in this anarchic system (Waltz, 1979, p. 111). At this point, it is seen that states respond to the anarchic nature of the international system similarly. But Waltz (1979) argues that the similarity between states is not limited to this, and he takes it a step further. According to Waltz (1979), the functions of different states are almost the same. All states make laws, defend themselves against other states, provide vital services to their citizens, and act according to their own interests. However, functionally similar states differ in terms of their ability to fulfil these functions because these states have different levels of power and wealth (Waltz, 1979, pp. 96-97).

At this point, it is critical to understand structural realists' views about power. According to structural realism, the desire for power of states originated from benefits

that are provided by power, not from the fascinating nature of power. As explained earlier, structural realists do not accept that desire for power is based on human nature. This difference is one of the most important things that separates structural realism from classical realism. All structural realists argue that power is a necessity for states in the anarchic international system. Up to this point, there is a parallelism between the different branches of structural realism. However, they have different opinions about the function of power.

According to defensive structural realism, “power is a means and not an end” (Waltz, 1979, p. 126). States desire power because power is a tool that enables states to survive and achieve their goals. In the sixth chapter of *Theory of International Politics*, Waltz emphasizes that states cannot know whether other states will attack them in the future. In the anarchical international system, one unit's desire for war is enough to outbreak a war (Waltz, 1979, p. 102). Declaring war is usually a unilateral act. When a state is attacked by another state, using force becomes the only way to answer the aggressor (Waltz, 1979, p. 113). At this point, if the defender is as powerful as the aggressor state, it will survive. However, international politics is not a fish tank. Big fish cannot always eat small fish; the balance of power mechanism does not allow that. According to Waltzian realism, states always prefer to join weak coalitions to balance strong coalitions (Waltz, 1979, p. 126).

At this point, Waltz draws attention to an important point. Waltz (1979) emphasizes that this behaviour of states proves that acquiring power is not the final goal for them. If the aims of the states were to reach the highest power, states would prefer to join the strongest coalition, and this situation would cause the emergence of a single hegemon. However, in the Waltzian world, states are status quoist. Their primary purpose is to protect what they have (Waltz, 1979, p. 126). Because of all these reasons, Waltz's structural realism is referred to as defensive realism.

If the general texture of *Theory of International Politics* is examined, it will be understood that Waltz tends to see power as a tool that is necessary for states to

protect themselves from others' attacks. Here, the possibility of an attack is the main thing that frightens states. However, according to Waltz, the cost of a possible war is too high to be endangered by states (Waltz, 1979, p. 196). This cost increased more from the passing time that the book was written to the present day.

According to Waltz, “power does not bring control” (Waltz, 1979, p. 193). He does not see power as a means of domination; hence his conception of power is different from both classical and offensive realists. At the beginning of the ninth chapter of *Theory of International Politics*, Waltz (1979) argues that power has four main functions. Firstly, power allows states to maintain their autonomy when they are confronted with other states’ powers. Secondly, power enables extra action plans for states. Thirdly, power allows states to make more mistakes. Possible consequences of a mistake may be more serious for weak states than for strong states (Waltz, 1979, pp. 194-195). In this context, Waltz (1979) directly says that “...strong states can be inattentive; they can afford not to learn; they can do the same dumb things over again”⁴ (Waltz, 1979, p. 195). However, weak states are not able to make mistakes again and again. Fourthly, power makes it possible for states to act more effectively in favour of their interests (Waltz, 1979, p. 195). As can be seen, according to Waltz, domination is not one of the functions of power; states gain strength to protect themselves from others’ attacks. At this point, the differences between offensive and defensive realists become more visible.

2.5. Offensive Structural Realism

Offensive structural realism is going to constitute the theoretical basement of this thesis. Because of that, it is very crucial to elaborate on the differences between offensive structural realism and defensive structural realism.

⁴ There is another important point to note here. As explained in the third section of this chapter, Morgenthau realizes that politicians could not always act rationally. However, he prefers to ignore this reality to construct a theory. In contrast, Waltz does not ignore the reality that states also may make some mistakes.

John Joseph Mearsheimer is one of the leading structural realists. His theory was fed by many points from both classical and structural realism. He redesigned Waltz's structural realism in order to explain aggression in the international sphere (Toft, 2005, p. 381) and named offensive realism⁵ his view of international relations to separate his structural realist theory from Waltz's structural realism (Mearsheimer, 2001).

2.5.1. Offensive Structural Realism versus Defensive Structural Realism

Neorealists try to read international politics through anarchy at the systemic level (Labs, 1997, p. 2; Pashakhanlou, 2018, p. 29). They concentrate on the concept of power to explain how states survive in this anarchical system (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 35). In this framework, Neorealists generally focus on great powers because powerful states have more ability to affect international politics (Waltz, 1979, pp. 72-73; Mearsheimer, 2001, p.5). However, they do not agree on how much power states need to have to survive in this anarchic system (Labs, 1997, p. 1; Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 35; Feng & Ruizhuang, 2006, p. 123, Pashakhanlou, 2018, p. 29).

Mearsheimer (2001) argues that Waltz ignores impulses that push powerful states to behave aggressively to gain more and more power in the international system. According to Mearsheimer (2001), Waltz sees states as powers that try to protect the balance of power in the international system. According to Waltz, states should not have more power than is enough to protect themselves. If they act aggressively, they will probably be punished by the balance of power mechanism. In this respect, Mearsheimer (2001) argues that Waltzian realism does not understand the roots of wars. Waltz does not emphasize the possible benefits of conflicts for the winning side

⁵ The term offensive structural realism was used instead of offensive realism to describe Mearsheimer's view of realism in order to avoid possible terminological confusion in this thesis because there is a distinction between offensive realism and defensive realism in neoclassical realist literature. Colin Elman (2004) also called offensive structural realists to describe the theoretical orientation of Labs, Layne, and Mearsheimer in his article that name is *Extending Offensive Realism: The Louisiana Purchase and America's Rise to Regional Hegemony* (Elman, 2004, p. 563).

(Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 19-21). This lack is one of the weakest points of defensive structural realism. In the Waltzian world, the balance of power pacifies states.

According to the analysis of Mearsheimer (2009), Waltz argues that the first aim of states is not to increase their power. Of course, sometimes states increase their power, but states aim to prevent other states from increasing their power in the first place. Balancing is the mechanism which ensures that in the world of defensive structural realists. At this point, Mearsheimer (2009) claims that there is no need to be aggressive in the defensive realists' world because the balancing mechanism will punish aggressive states (Mearsheimer, 2009, p. 243). According to defensive realists, "... hegemonic grand strategies are self-defeating" (Layne, 2006, p. 19). In this respect, defensive structural realism has a status quoist nature. The balance of power is sensitive to any change.

Defensive realists argue that there is no need to have more power than necessary to survive (Layne, 2006, p. 17). In response to this, offensive realists argue that it is impossible to know how much power is enough for states to feel secure (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 34; Layne, 2006, p. 17). In addition, great powers cannot know how the power distribution will be in the future; the distribution of power among states is not a stable parameter; it is constantly changing (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 17-18).

According to offensive structural realism, states are not status quo powers that only focus on protecting the existing balance of power (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 21). Mearsheimer says that "a state's ultimate goal is to be the hegemon⁶ in the system" (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 21) because "in the anarchic world of international politics, it is better to be Godzilla than Bambi" (Mearsheimer, 2006b, p. 162). States wait for opportunities to increase their power. In international relations, states are not content with what they have.

⁶ "...the only great power in the system" (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 40).

To sum up, offensive realists argue that the anarchic nature of the international system pushes states to maximize their power in order to augment their security (Labs, 1997; Mearsheimer, 2001; Noguchi, 2011, p. 62). Like defensive realists, offensive realists also argued that survival is the first and most important aim of states; and power is the tool that serves this purpose of states (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 21). The starting point of both offensive and defensive structural realism is anarchy, which is located at the heart of international politics, but arguments of these theories about the consequences created by anarchy are different

Like Waltz, Mearsheimer (2001) also argues that the structure of the international system affects the behaviours of states. In the international system, there is no central authority that controls and limits the acts of states, and states cannot know how other states will act in the future. Because of this situation, all states perceive other states as a threat (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 32). In stark contrast to the defensive realist school, which claims that excessive power is a cursed thing for states because this power causes attacks from other states that are also living with fear in the anarchic international system, Mearsheimer (2001) directly said that:

...the great powers that shape the international system fear each other and compete for power as a result. Indeed, their ultimate aim is to gain a position of dominant power over others, because having dominant power is the best means to ensure one's own survival. Strength ensures safety, and the greatest strength is the greatest insurance of safety (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. xi).

There is another important distinction between defensive and offensive structural realism. This difference originates from their perspectives on theories of foreign policy and theories of international politics. Waltz made a clear division between theories of foreign policy and theories of international politics. According to Waltz (1979), unlike a theory of foreign policy that focuses on the domestic factors of a state that affects its acts in the international area, a theory of international politics concentrates on the international sphere of politics. He argues that theories of foreign policies respond to why states, which are living within the bounds of the same international system, act differently. On the other hand, theories of international

politics try to explain why different states act in the same way (Waltz, 1979, pp. 71-72). Waltz asserted that theories of international politics generally are not able to make predictions about the foreign policies of different states (Waltz, 1996). The singular behaviour of states is not included in the scope of Waltz's theory; his theory aims to clarify international outcomes (Mearsheimer, 2009, p. 245).

In short, Waltzian realism argues that foreign policy theories are needed to examine the singular behaviour of states. However, Colin Elman objected to this idea. In his article, *Horses for Courses: Why not Neorealist Theories of Foreign Policy?*, Elman (1996a) argues that neorealist theory should also function as foreign policy theories, and it already has this function. According to Elman, this function is essential to explain some crucial questions about international relations (Elman, 1996a).

Waltz's position on this point is crystal clear. He wrote an article, which name is *International Politics is not Foreign Policy*, as a response to criticisms of Elman. The essence of Waltz's opinion about the topic could be understood from the name of the article. Waltz (1996) accepts that his theory may explain some foreign policy questions; however, this does not mean that it can be used the neorealist theory as both theories of international politics and foreign policy. He argues that theories of international politics commonly cannot make predictions about different states' foreign policies (Waltz, 1996). Against Waltz's response, Elman wrote an article which name is *Cause, Effect, and Consistency: A Response to Kenneth Waltz*. According to Elman (1996b), Waltz's answer was insufficient to prove his claims that the theory of international politics cannot function as foreign policy theories (Elman, 1996b).

Like Elman, other offensive structural realists also explain state behaviour through the system. As emphasized by Toft (2005), unlike Waltzian realism, the offensive realism of Mearsheimer includes singular behaviours of states. However, it does not mean that Mearsheimer abandons system-level analysis methods; he explains acts of units according to the dynamics of international structure (Toft, 2005, p. 389).

At this point, Mearsheimer directs many criticisms to Waltzian realism. According to Mearsheimer, Waltz and other defensive structural realists avoid articulating the rational actor model to their theory (Mearsheimer, 2006a; 2009). As Mearsheimer (2006a) claimed, defensive structural realists need a foreign policy theory to explain irrational acts of states. A foreign policy theory necessitates unit-level analysis. This means that the structural level analysis is insufficient to explain some aspects of world politics for the defensive structural realist. However, offensive realists do not need a foreign policy theory to explain that because they accepted the rational actor model in their approaches. They adhere to the structural level analysis (Mearsheimer, 2006a, p. 112).

Like Waltz, Mearsheimer (2009) also admits that states cannot have perfect knowledge. They cannot know how much power they and their enemies exactly have. Because of lack of knowledge, sometimes they may make wrong decisions. However, according to Mearsheimer (2009), Waltz's theory goes one step further. In the Waltzian world, states sometimes do not make appropriate decisions even though they have the related information about some situations. At this point, internal dynamics start to come into play. As a result of conflicts between different interest groups in domestic politics, states may take wrong decisions. Therefore, Waltz insisted that a foreign policy theory is necessary to understand the behaviours of states based on their internal processes. However, he did not try to formulate a foreign policy theory (Mearsheimer, 2009, pp. 244-245). This situation has some important consequences. The theory's inability to explain state behaviour, which is crucial to understand international politics, is one of these consequences (Mearsheimer, 2009, p. 247). Moreover, in a world where states do not act rationally, the balance of power mechanism cannot work properly (Mearsheimer, 2009, p. 251). Waltz's rejection of the rational actor model makes his world too chaotic (Mearsheimer, 2009).

For all these reasons, some realist scholars, who were affected by Waltzian realism, include domestic politics and unit-level analysis in their theory (Mearsheimer, 2006a, p. 112; Mearsheimer, 2009, p. 247). However, offensive realism does not need to

unit-level analysis tools because it accepts that states are rational (Mearsheimer, 2006a, p. 112).

Although Mearsheimer says that his theory does not need a foreign policy theory, this does not mean that his theory fully understands the behaviour of states. Like Waltz's theory, Mearsheimer's theory is also criticized for not including unit-level factors. According to Snyder (2002), Mearsheimer predominantly focuses on the power struggle between great powers, and his theory does not involve other issues of international politics that are not related to security. The power struggle in his world is a little bit far from reality. Snyder (2002) also highlights that Mearsheimer ignores domestic politics (Snyder, 2002, pp. 171-172).

Mearsheimer (2001) also accepts that his theory does not involve domestic political dynamics that sometimes affect the political outputs of states. For this reason, he says that some situations cannot be explained through offensive structural realism. He also adds that formulating a general and holistic theory has such consequences (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 10-11). This claim coincides with Morgenthau's and Waltz's statements that some things can be ignored for the sake of creating theory.

Some parameters are often ignored to theorize a subject in other social sciences. It should not be forgotten that, like Waltzian realism, Mearsheimer's theory is a system-level theory. At this point, this question may come to mind: How can a structural theory that does not address the internal systems of states be used as a foreign policy theory?

Mearsheimer and Elman argue that offensive structural realism can also be used as a foreign policy theory. It does not mean that offensive structural realism also considers the internal factors of states in order to function as a foreign policy theory. Unlike Waltz, they argue that singular behaviours of states can be understood via structural analysis.

As examined in this section, defensive structural realism and offensive structural realism have a lot of similar and different points. These similarities and differences tell lots of things about offensive structural realism. But apart from its similarities and differences to defensive structural realism, there are many other features of the structural realist approach. In the next section of this chapter, offensive realism will be examined more closely.

2.5.2. A Closer Look at Offensive Structural Realism

In the previous section, offensive structural realism critics about defensive structural realism were examined in detail. Therefore, this issue will not be reviewed here again. However, it is important to remind that Mearsheimer (2006a) argues that defensive structural realism is insufficient to explain international politics. In this respect, he aims to create a new theory that can explain the behaviours of great powers (Mearsheimer, 2006a, p. 111).

While Waltz's theory is based on two assumptions -anarchic international system and states desire to survive- Mearsheimer built his theory on five important assumptions (Mearsheimer, 2006a, p. 112) that he named “bedrock assumptions” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 30). Mearsheimer (2001) emphasizes that none of these assumptions can explain the behaviours of states singly. Each of these assumptions forms parts of a whole and makes theory able to explain states’ desire for hegemony (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 29).

The anarchic nature of the international system is the first assumption of Mearsheimer’s theory (Mearsheimer, 1994/95, p. 10; Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 30; Mearsheimer, 2006a, p. 112). Mearsheimer highlights that the notion of anarchy means “ordering principle” in the realist literature, not chaos (Mearsheimer, 1994/95, p. 10; Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 30). Anarchy is a consequence of a lack of central authority above states in the international sphere (Mearsheimer, 1994/95, p. 10; Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 30). As emphasized in previous sections, the concept of

anarchy is one of the building blocks of all neo-realisms. Almost all neorealist scholars begin to construct their theories at this point.

In his second assumption, Mearsheimer emphasizes that states have military capacities that they can use as a tool to attack or even destroy other states, and this offensive power turn states into potential prey and hunters for other states (Mearsheimer, 1994/95, p. 10; Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 30-31). It is certain that, even though weapons are acquired or developed by states purely for defensive purposes, these weapons can also be used for attack. Mearsheimer also emphasizes that even an unarmed state has military capacity; because citizens of this state may use their punch to fight against other states (Mearsheimer, 1994/95, p. 10; Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 30-31). We may note parenthetically here that human beings are very successful in using irrelevant objects as weapons in order to harm others.

The third assumption emphasizes that states cannot certainly know the future behaviours of other states (Mearsheimer, 1994/95, p. 10; Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 31; Mearsheimer, 2006a, p. 112). It means that a state cannot be sure whether other states will attack it (Mearsheimer, 1994/95, p. 10; Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 31). In this respect, states continue to increase their power even if they are not under threat (Labs, 1997, p. 11). Even if the intention of a state is completely good, it is not certain that the good intentions of this state will not change in the future (Mearsheimer, 1994/95, p. 10; Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 31). Because of these reasons, states should always be ready for a possible attack from other states.

In the fourth assumption, it is argued that the first aim of states is survival (Mearsheimer, 1994/95, p. 10; Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 31). According to Mearsheimer (2001), states may have other objectives which are not related to their security. However, if these objectives are not compatible with the state's position in the balance of power, states tend to give up on them (Mearsheimer, 2001). In this respect, like Waltz, Mearsheimer also argues that survival is the prerequisite for all other goals.

The fifth assumption emphasizes that states are rational units that act to increase their probability of survival (Mearsheimer, 1994/95, p. 10; Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 31). As mentioned in the previous section, this is one of the most crucial differences between offensive structural realism and defensive structural realism.

The combination of these five assumptions sometimes pushes states to act offensively towards their counterparts (Mearsheimer, 1994/95, pp. 10-11; Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 31-32). According to Mearsheimer (2001), "...three general patterns of behaviour result [because of these assumptions]: fear, self-help, and power maximization" (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 32).

It is vital to examine these behavioural patterns to understand offensive structural realism. According to Mearsheimer (1994/95), states always fear other states because states have offensive capacities, and there is no authority in the international system that can stop or punish the aggressor states. In addition, the possible consequences of the wars are very fearful for the states, especially for the losing side (Mearsheimer, 1994/95, p. 11). It should be noted that, according to neorealism, states cannot know how other states will behave in the future. In this respect, Mearsheimer argues that states have to brace themselves for the worst scenario (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 45).

The reason for the emergence of the self-help system is the absence of central authority over states in the international system (Mearsheimer, 1994/95, p. 11). States cannot call "911" to protect themselves from aggression (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 32, 33, 51). For this reason, every state is responsible for its own security and survival (Mearsheimer, 1994/95, p. 11; Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 33). At this point, it may be asked how states are always alone in a world where they can make alliances.

According to Mearsheimer, formed alliances cannot be maintained for a long time, and nobody can know whether allied states will be hostile suddenly to each other (Mearsheimer, 1994/95, p. 11; Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 33). Moreover, a state focuses not only on what it will gain but also on what others will gain (Mearsheimer, 1994/95,

p. 12; Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 52). For this reason, states do not want their allies, who may become enemies in the future, to gain more power than themselves. In addition to all these factors, it is also impossible to guarantee that allied states will not make cheat in order to increase their own share (Mearsheimer, 1994/95, p. 13; Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 52). For this reason, like other realists, Mearsheimer approaches alliances with suspicion.

The most effective strategy to increase security is to increase power (Labs, 1997, pp. 4-5). In this respect, offensive structural realists argue that all states seek to increase their power because the most powerful state in the system is also the safest state in the system (Mearsheimer, 1994/95; 2001; Layne, 2002). A state does not attack another state which is stronger than itself (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 33). As explained in detail in the previous section, this is contrary to the views of defensive structural realists. According to defensive structural realists, the state should only have enough power. However, Mearsheimer argues that states' desire to be the hegemon (Mearsheimer, 1994/95, 2001, 2006b); and their desire for power ends only when they become the hegemon (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 34). The main reason for states' desire to be hegemons is the fear and uncertainty created by the system.

Mearsheimer (2001) draw a picture of world politics in which states are rarely satisfied with the current distribution of power among states. All states except the hegemon try to change the balance of power in their favour. Since international politics is a zero-sum game, the increase in the power of one state causes the power of other states to decrease (Mearsheimer, 2001).

However, Mearsheimer argues that it is almost impossible for states to become a hegemon. There is no state that has been a global hegemon in the history of the world because different continents are separated by large bodies of water that prevent a state from being a hegemon in other regions (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 40-41; Mearsheimer, 2006b, p. 160; Mearsheimer, 2010, p. 387). A state only can be a hegemon in its region, and the United States is the single country that has achieved regional

hegemony throughout world history (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 40-41, 143; Mearsheimer, 2006b, p. 160; Mearsheimer, 2010, pp. 387-388).

It does not mean that states always act aggressively to change the balance of power in their favour. “Every state might want to be king of the hill”, but the amount of existing power of states determines their range of motion (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 37). Mearsheimer (2001) emphasizes that states that are stronger than their rivals can act aggressively if it serves their interests. However, such an opportunity does not exist for a state weaker than its rivals (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 37). In this context, states try to maintain the status quo if they do not have enough power to change it. However, a state that has the power to change the balance of power in its favour will not miss this opportunity.

Like all realist theories, power is a vital concept for offensive structural realism. Mearsheimer (2001) examines the notion of power into two different subheadings. The first one is latent power. Latent power is mainly used to describe social and economic entities, like wealth, population, and technology, which are needed to have a strong army. The second is military power, which means the size and power of armies of states (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 55-56). At this point, we see that non-military powers are important to the extent that they can be converted into military power. In this respect, Mearsheimer considers military power as the main determinant of power. However, he strongly emphasizes the importance of latent power to have a strong military; because states need to have a large population and a strong economy in order to have a strong army (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 60-61).

Mearsheimer (2001) considers only the economic power of states in order to measure their potential power because -he argues that- a state, which has a strong economy, already has a large population (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 61-62). However, it does not mean that all states with large populations have strong economies (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 62) or that all strong economies have superior armies (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 75-76).

In *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Mearsheimer explained the types of military powers and the functions of these powers in detail. In his book, Mearsheimer (2001) argues that land forces are the most vital component of armies of great powers, even in the nuclear era, because only land forces can be used to invade enemy territory. On the other hand, he argues that the core function of the navy and air force is to support the land forces (Mearsheimer, 2001). The main point here is that wars are still being won on land.

The other critical military issue examined in *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* is nuclear weapons. Nuclear bombs provide states with the capacity to inflict unprecedented damage that can be used against their enemies, so the effect of these bombs on the balance of power is a matter of close interest to realists. According to Mearsheimer (2001), nuclear bombs reduce the possibility of the outbreak of war between great powers. However, this does not mean the power competition between states has ended. On the contrary, conventional armies are still the most outstanding components of states' power (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 84). That is what power competition during the Cold War taught us: Despite their vast nuclear power, the poles continued to compete in developing their conventional arms as well (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 132).

Unlike Waltz, Mearsheimer argues that the outbreak of a nuclear war is possible between two nuclear states (Mearsheimer, 2006c, p. 240). For all these reasons, nuclear weapons are not guardian angels that make their owners completely safe. Even a non-nuclear state can attack a nuclear state for limited purposes (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 132). In this respect, every nuclear state should also have land forces.

However, there is an exception to this situation. As emphasized by Mearsheimer (2001), if a state develops technology that can fully defend itself against a nuclear attack and at the same time launch a nuclear attack on its enemies, it will not have to worry about possible attacks from its enemies. In this case, the state achieves nuclear supremacy; and it becomes nuclear hegemon. However, Mearsheimer (2001)

emphasizes that achieving nuclear hegemony is unlikely for the foreseeable future (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 128-130).

As accentuated above, the notion of power is too crucial for offensive structural realism because they look at the world through power-centrism glasses. However, this does not mean that states can always calculate their powers and their enemies' powers accurately. Nevertheless, rational states miscalculate from time to time because they invariably make important decisions on the basis of imperfect information. They hardly ever have complete information about any situation they confront, which forces them to make educated guesses (Mearsheimer, 2009, p. 244). Therefore, even if they are rational, they can make mistakes⁷ (Mearsheimer, 2009, p. 244). There are many reasons why states have incomplete and inaccurate information. The most important of these reasons is that states try to hide their real motivations and their current power from other states (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 38; Mearsheimer, 2009, p. 244). It is a part of their strategy that they implement in order to ensure their survival and maximize their powers.

Therefore, the problem of misinformation does not arise simply because states lie. In addition to this, it is nearly impossible to truly estimate the military power of states before seeing their performance on the battleground (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 38; Mearsheimer, 2009, p. 244). War is a very complex disaster. There are many factors that affect the direction of a war. Therefore, it is not possible to predict the outcomes of war accurately.

To sum up, states want to have the most powerful land armies and nuclear superiority to guarantee their survival in the chaotic international political area. However, power is not the only factor that affects whether states feel secure in the Mearsheimerian

⁷ Rationality is to make the most beneficial decision based on the available information. Whether a decision is rational or not should be examined independently from its outcomes. In this context, the fact that states make mistakes does not mean that they are not rational.

world. Unlike Waltz, Mearsheimer considers geography as a unit-level factor in his theory (Toft, 2005).

Most of the lands on the Earth are separated from each other by seas and oceans. According to Mearsheimer (2001), these large bodies of water restrict the mobility of land forces. Of course, he does not deny that land armies can be transferred by warships. However, he emphasizes that an army that makes amphibious landings is at a disadvantage against another army that makes land defence. After all, navies can only carry a limited number of troops and military equipment (Mearsheimer, 2001). Moreover, during a naval invasion, necessary material can be only supplied by naval or air forces. It is not only an expensive practice that injures the economy of the invader state but also a practice that reduces the power of the invader state because, during overseas invasions, a part of naval and air forces must be deployed only to provide supplies. For all these reasons, water bodies reduce the power projections of great powers and make it impossible for them to achieve global hegemony (Mearsheimer, 2001).

In addition, Mearsheimer (2001) divides states as insular states and continental states according to their geographical position. Continental states are states that have land connections with other great powers. The neighbour countries of continental states can attack them without using their naval forces. On the other side, if there is only a state located in a piece of land which is surrounded by water bodies, it is called an insular state. If there is only one great power in a land surrounded by water and there is no other great power in that region, this great power is also an insular state. According to Mearsheimer, a superpower located in another continent may launch a ground attack on an insular state through its neighbours (Mearsheimer, 2001). Therefore, since they are geographically protected against ground attacks, island states are the safest states according to the geographical sense.

Apart from that, powerful island states have another advantage over powerful continental states. According to Labs (1997), if island states have strong naval

powers, they may take control of other territories, where are located far from other great powers. In this way, they can gain power by controlling weak states. However, it is unlikely that landlocked countries and countries surrounded by great forces use this strategy (Labs, 1997, p. 13).

As mentioned before, according to Mearsheimer (2001), a regional hegemon cannot be a global hegemon because of the stopping power of water. In fact, it means that a regional hegemon cannot expand its hegemony to other regions. Nevertheless, a regional hegemon endeavour to avoid the emergence of regional hegemons in other regions; because a new emerging regional hegemon, even if it has emerged in a region that is too far away, may disturb the existing balance of power structure in other regions (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 141-142; Mearsheimer, 2010, p. 388). The stopping power of water does not cause disruption of the balance mechanism. For all these reasons, a regional hegemon wants more than one great power to exist simultaneously in other regions (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 141; Mearsheimer, 2010, p. 388). Great powers do not want other states to gain power. They only want to change the balance of power in their favour.

At this point, Mearsheimer (2001) also explains ways of changing or protecting the balance of power mechanism for states in detail. War (direct military attack), blackmail (to threat using force), bait and bleed (to endeavour to start a war between different states), and bloodletting (to endeavour to make more destructive an existing war between different states) are strategies that states can use to protect or change the balance of power in their favour. While blackmail is an efficient method to avoid the burdens of war, the chances of success are low. Additionally, the chances of success of bloodletting strategy have a greater chance of success than bait and bleed. According to Mearsheimer (2001), balancing (taking direct responsibility for stopping the challenger who tries to shift the balance of power in its favour) and buck-passing (transferring the responsibility of stopping the challenger to other states) are also other strategies that can be used to stop a great power which tries to change the balance of power in its favour. Buck-passing is a more desirable strategy for states

because buck-passer does not undertake the expensive cost of war. However, if buck-passing does not seem to work, the great power has to balance the challenger, who is trying to be a regional hegemon (Mearsheimer, 2001, Chapter 5). States prefer some of these methods depending on the situation they face.

As emphasized by Mearsheimer (2001), appeasement (to make concessions to the challenger in order to stop its aggression)⁸ and bandwagoning (to collaborate with the challenger in order to get a share of the spoils of war) are other strategies. However, these methods cause the balance of power to shift in favour of the challenger state. For this reason, Mearsheimer argues that these methods are not effective (Mearsheimer, 2001, Chapter 5).

Neorealists generally agree that states mainly prefer to follow balancing strategies in order to stop aggressions of the challenger state, rather than bandwagoning (Labs, 1997, pp. 14-15). As emphasized above, if buck-passing is not a possible action, great powers prefer to balance the challenger. According to Mearsheimer (2001), balancing aims to dissuade the challenger and protect the balance of power. In this strategy, the balancer may use diplomatic channels to deter the challenger, form an alliance to balance the challenger (external balance) or allocate extra resources to deter the challenger (internal balance) (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 156-157).

According to Mearsheimer, successful buck-passing or balancing may stop the challenger, while unsuccessful attempts may cause the challenger to gain power and even become a regional hegemon (Elman, 2004). However, Elman, who is also an offensive structural realist scholar, does not agree with Mearsheimer on this point. He claims that "regional hegemony is only achievable when it is easy" (Elman, 2004, p. 563). Starting from the fact that France sold Louisiana to the US in order to prevent

⁸ This strategy may seem a bit ironic, but it has an understandable explanation. As said by Mearsheimer (2001), the appeaser usually allows the challenger to take possession of another state's territory. In this way, the challenger feels more secure and thus becomes more peaceful (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 163). Regardless of the consequences of implementing this strategy, its goal is to pacify the threatening state.

the British-American alliance and to keep its military forces in continental Europe in order to maintain its expansionist policies in continental Europe, Elman (2004) revealed that the continental great powers would primarily endeavour to deal with the problems that emerge in their own continents. For this reason, he claims that while European states deal with the problems in their own regions, they are not interested in the rise of the US. (Elman, 2004).

In this respect, some offensive structural realists argue that the United States became a regional hegemon thanks to the absence of a balancer; there was no local great power that could balance the US (Elman, 2004; Layne, 2006, p. 22). European great powers did not respond to the expansion of the US in the Western Hemisphere, which is far from the European peninsula, because European great powers were endeavouring to deal with other threats that emerged in their region (Elman, 2004). According to Layne, this situation is caused to the multipolar nature of the European continent (Layne, 2006, p. 22). For these reasons, according to Elman (2004), the fact that the US is a regional hegemon does not mean that other great powers can be also regional hegemons because the US is a regional hegemon that is able to balance possible challengers in today's international system (Elman, 2004).

Elman's criticisms⁹ generally relate to Mearsheimer's views on regional hegemony. Even if all his criticisms are accepted as correct, the fact that it is best for states to maximize their power to survive does not change. Moreover, world history has witnessed the decline and collapse of powerful states and empires, which people thought would never collapse. For this reason, states always should be ready for serious changes in the balance of power. It is expected that a rational state will take the right decisions in such crises and increase its share in the balance of power. States should have a plan B for every possible scenario. Moreover, as explained above, states do have not perfect knowledge. The reason why the European great powers did

⁹ Elman called his view of offensive structural realism as the extended version of offensive realism (Elman, 2004).

not balance the rising US may be that they did not estimate that the US could become a regional hegemon.

Christopher Layne also criticized Mearsheimer's claims on regional hegemony from a different sense. Layne (2002) argues that Mearsheimer's argumentation about the stopping power of water does not reflect the reality because the United States solved this problem by deploying necessary materials and troops and building the necessary logistical infrastructure in different parts of the world after WW2. Moreover, Europe is closer to the US than some Latin American countries. The US are not able to attack some Latin American countries by land (Layne, 2002, pp. 131-132). Even the shortest route to go from the US to Brazil by land passes through Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, and Colombia. In this respect, according to Layne, the stopping power of water could not prevent the US from dominating the Persian Gulf, East Asia, and Europe, thus becoming a global hegemon (Layne, 2002, p. 132). Layne also argues that, according to the offensive realism view of Mearsheimer, if a state becomes a regional hegemon, it starts to act like a status quo power (Layne, 2002, p. 128; Layne, 2006, p.19). In contrast, Layne (2002) argues that this argument of Mearsheimer conflict not only with the general perspective of offensive realism but also with Mearsheimerian offensive realism. In the context of Offensive Realism, states never settle for a certain amount of power; they always aim to increase their power. Power increases security, so the global hegemon becomes the safest state in the system (Layne, 2002, pp. 129-131). In this respect, "the quest for security drives a regional hegemon to push the geopolitical envelope and become a global hegemon" (Layne, 2002, p. 131).

Layne's critiques are critical to offensive structural realism and reveal how the United States, as the world's most powerful state, has maintained its influence in other parts of the world. However, according to the hegemony description by Mearsheimer, a global hegemon should be the single great power in the world (Mearsheimer, 2001). According to Mearsheimer:

Some might argue that the post-Cold War world is unipolar, which is another way of saying that the United States is a global hegemon. If true, there would be hardly any security competition in Europe and Northeast Asia, because there would be no great powers in those areas-by definition-to challenge the mighty United States. This is certainly the state of affairs in the Western Hemisphere, where the United States is the only great power and it is not involved in security competition with any of its neighbors. Canada and Mexico, for example, pose no military threat whatsoever to the United States. Nor does Cuba, which is a minor political irritant, not a serious threat to American security. But the international system is not unipolar. Although the United States is a hegemon in the Western Hemisphere, it is not a global hegemon. Certainly the United States is the preponderant economic and military power in the world, but there are two other great powers in the international system: China and Russia. Neither can match American military might, but both have nuclear arsenals, the capability to contest and probably thwart a U.S. invasion of their homeland, and limited power-projection capability. They are not Canada and Mexico. (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 381)

At this point, the thesis accepts Mearsheimer's arguments that the US is a regional hegemon; because, according to offensive realist arguments, a hegemon is a position which cannot be threatened by other states. However, as emphasized by Mearsheimer, Russia and China are other great powers in the international system. The United States does not have enough power to dominate these countries. In this respect, we cannot argue that the US are the single hegemon in the system.

In conclusion, offensive structural realists argue that the international system is a state of nature. The system is anarchic. There is no authority above states that can limit their acts. Because of this situation, states aim to maximize their power in order to survive. Therefore, offensive structural realists claim that all states desire to be the hegemon. Hegemony is the condition in which a state would feel most secure. In this context, the rise of China is one of the issues that most attracts the attention of offensive structural realists.

Offensive realists argue that rising China seek or will seek hegemony. The thesis aims to examine the rise of China based on this argument of offensive structural realists. However, before examining offensive structural realist claims that rising China seek

or will seek hegemony through the Taiwan question and the Belt and Road Initiative, the reasons and consequences of China's economic rise should be examined.

CHAPTER 3

THE RISE OF CHINA

3.1. The Economic Rise of China

States are key actors in international relations. They are located at the heart of world politics. Scales are very sensitive in international politics; the rise and fall of a state affect all states in the system.

In the 20th century, the balance of the scales turned upside down many times. For this reason, the world has witnessed two terrible world wars, a cold war that divided the world into two, many ethnic wars, and many more sufferings. Many states fought with other states and escalated conflicts between different states to increase their own power. These devastating wars primarily cause to shift of the power centre from the conflicting European states to the US and the USSR. At the end of the 20th century, the Soviet Union was dissolved. Cold War ended, and Russia became a weak competitor for the US. In all this turmoil, China achieved to increase its power by moving from a socialist economy to a socialist market economy. It has not only become the second largest economy in the world but also has become the primary rival and most important trading partner of the US. It is claimed by some authors in the literature that China will surpass the United States and become the world's largest economy in the not-too-distant future (Paul, 2016: p. 216; Lau, 2019: p. 188). When China's transformation began in 1978, probably no one expected that China would grow this much in the future.

When the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, it was a backward rural economy (Zilibotti, 2017, p. 946). Today, China is one of the leading economic powers that produce goods for the world. From 1952 to 2018, China's GDP grew 174 times at a constant price; its GDP became RMB 90 trillion in 2018, which was RMB 67.9 billion in 1952 (SCIO, 2019b, "I. China Has Found a Development Path Suited to Its Actual Conditions" section, para. 3). According to data from World Bank (n.d.-a), China's GDP showed a 2.2% raise in 2020 and 8.1% in 2021. In 2021, the US's GDP was 23 trillion USD, while China's GDP was 17.73 trillion USD (World Bank, n.d.-b). These figures were \$2,35 trillion for the United States in 1978, compared to just 149,54 billion for China (World Bank, n.d.-b). That is what the people who claim that China is rising mean.

From the beginning of the reform process in the late 1970s to 2018, China grew by an average of 9.4% annually (SCIO, 2019b, "II. China's Development Is an Opportunity for the World", para. 2; Lin, 2021, p. 106). From the beginning of the transformation process until 2015, the average annual inflation in China was below 3 per cent (Yongding, 2015, p. 138). During the transformation process, the GDP per capita of China has also increased from 156 USD to 12,556 USD (World Bank, n.d.-c).

These massive growth rates of China are a result of its transition to a socialist market economy. Before the transformation period, China did not show its real potential because of the inefficient nature of the socialist planning system and its isolation from the outside world (Zilibotti, 2017, p. 946). China, which started to open to the outside world in the 1980s, has begun to liberalize without giving up state control over economic policies (Paul, 2016, p. 208). After a long period of transformation, China has become a market economy; however, the reformation process has not ended yet; state firms and local governments continue to be key actors in China's economy (Yongding, 2015, p. 139). Today, China has a state-driven capitalist political-economic system rather than a communist system.

All these indicators show that China has become an economic superpower today. However, according to realists, the fundamental element of power is military power. At this point, the economic power of the states is important to the extent of their capacity to turn their economic power into military power. As mentioned in the second chapter, Mearsheimer (2001), one of the framers of offensive structural realism, divides power into latent and military power. Economies, populations, and technologies of states constitute their latent powers. On the other hand, latent power is the prerequisite for states to have formidable armies (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 55-56). In this context, countries need sufficient population, advanced technological level, and economic power in order to establish strong armies. In addition, the level of industrial development of a state determines its capacity to produce more advanced military technologies (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 63).

Over the past 40 years, China has developed in every sense and continues to develop. While China was an agricultural country which is close to the outside world, it has become the world's industrial giant, the second largest economy and the second largest military spending state. China, which is continuing to develop in the field of industry and technology, is also the most populous country in the world. Considering all these, China has the potential to become a military superpower.

For these reasons, Mearsheimer said in the conclusion of *the Tragedy of Great Power Politics* that if "...China becomes not only a leading producer of cutting-edge technologies, but the world's wealthiest great power, it would almost certainly use its wealth to build a mighty military machine" (Mearsheimer, 2001, p.401). Mearsheimer wrote out this sentence in 2001. According to the World Bank (n.d.-d), while China's military spending was \$26.6 billion in 2001, this figure increased to \$252.3 billion in 2020 (World Bank, n.d.-d). It means that China is closer to becoming a "mighty military machine" than it was in 2001.

Offensive realists are sure that fear and the will to the survival of states will push them to increase their military strength. According to them, the international system

pushes states to maximize their power to augment their security (Labs, 1997; Mearsheimer, 2001; Noguchi, 2011, p. 62). In this respect, Mearsheimer asserts that “China will want to make sure that it is so powerful that no state in Asia has the wherewithal to threaten it” (Mearsheimer, 2006b, p. 162). However, states need to have a large population and a strong economy so as to have a strong army (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 60-61). From this, it can be deduced that an economically rising China will turn its economic power into military power to ensure its survival in the anarchic world. In this respect, Mearsheimer claims that “if China's economy hits the skids and does not recover fears about China will subside considerably” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 144).

However, it should not be forgotten that China is still a developing country. It still has enormous economic development potential. It also has enough population, technology, and industrial development level to transfer its latent power to military power. In this context, it is critical to understand the historical background of China's economic ascendance in order to evaluate the scope and speed of its current economic growth, which is the origin of its military power.

3.1.1. Pre-Communist Era

Considering the facts that are evaluated above, it is obvious that China is a rising giant. However, it is not the first rise of China; it was one of the wealthiest nations in the past. China was the technological superpower of the world until the 16th century (Zilibotti, 2017, p. 961). According to the seminal work of Maddison (2007), the GDP of China was more than the total GDP of Western European countries even in 1820 (Maddison, 2007, pp. 174-177). At that time, China's GDP accounted for 33% of the world's total output (Maddison, 2007, pp. 174-177; Li, 2007, pp. 5-6, 24). However, after the 1840s, China entered a long period of decline (Maddison, 2007, p. 157-158).

By the 16th century, Western Europe had surpassed China in both science and per capita wealth (Maddison, 2007, p. 157). Especially rise of Britain and its colonization

of India in the 18th century moved the centre of the world economy to Western Europe (Li, 2008, p. 6). This situation changed the balance of power in favour of the British Empire. British Empire, which had begun to strengthen, became even stronger with the resources it received from its colonies, and it became an empire on which the sun never set. During this period, Britain reached an unprecedented power in the world.

British Empire, which had the advanced technologies of its time in the military, defeated the Chinese Empire in two Opium Wars, which occurred between 1839-1842 and 1856-1860 (Li, 2008, p. 6). After the defeat of the Chinese Empire in the Opium Wars, foreign powers have been acquired many concessions for foreign trade from the Chinese Empire, and the Chinese Empire lost its control over Hong Kong (Chan, 2015, pp. 27-28). As a result of opening to foreign trade, China started to integrate into the capitalist system (Li, 2008, p. 6).

Although China has strived to carry out reforms in some areas due to these humiliating defeats, these attempts failed (Chan, 2015, p. 29). In the continuation of this process, the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 took place. With the Shimonoseki treaty signed as a result of this war, China gave control of Taiwan to the Japanese Empire, accepted the independence of Korea, and lost its control over the Ryukyu Islands; in addition to all these, it was obliged to pay a large amount of war indemnity to the Japanese Empire (Li, 2008, p. 7). The consequences of this war still pose security threats to the region today.

Defeat in the 1894-1895 Sino-Japanese War caused devastating internal conflicts in the Chinese Empire, and as a result of this turmoil, the Boxer Rebellion emerged (Li, 2008, pp. 7-8). Although the Boxer Rebellion was suppressed, the Chinese Empire was faced with the Wuchang Rebellion, which would bring the end of the empire about ten years after (Chan, 2015, p. 31). The Qing dynasty was taken down, and the Republic of China was established in 1912 (Chan, 2015, p. 31). However, it was

impossible to mention a unified China for this period. China is divided into different parts, which are ruled by several warlords (Li, 2008, p. 9).

By the 1920s, Sun Yat-sen gathered an army and started to take action to unify China under one rule (Chan, 2015, p. 31). During these years, the Communist Party of China (the CPC) was merged with the Kuomintang (the Nationalist Party) (Li, 2008, p. 10). In 1925, Sun Yat-sen died, and Chiang Kai-shek became the new leader of the Kuomintang (Chan, 2015, p. 31). After taking control of many warlords, Chiang Kai-shek started to launch operations against the Communist Party, so a civil war broke out (Chan, 2015, pp. 31-32). This civil war continued until the Sino-Japanese war began in 1937 (Chan, 2015, pp. 31-32). The Japanese Empire entered World War II on the side of the Axis powers. However, this war ended with the defeat of the Japanese Empire in 1945. With this defeat, Japan withdrew from China; and the Chinese Civil War continued. At the end of the civil war, the Communist Party of China was victorious, and the People's Republic of China was established in 1949.

3.1.2. Communist Era

With the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Chinese society was gathered under a single unitary state, but China was an underdeveloped poor economy at this time (Zilibotti, 2017, p. 961). As argued by Perkins (2015) Communist Party focused on changing the economic system. Control of industry and commerce was started to seize by the government. In this respect, China transformed into a centrally planned command economic system, where economic production and distribution are decided by the government, not market forces (Perkins, 2015, p. 41).

The newly established China was a communist state in which the means of production were in the hands of the state. There was no private sector. The country was ruled by a single party, and it was closed to the outside world. Before China's transformation began in 1978, more than %70 of the GDP was accumulated by State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) (Lin, 2021, p. 106). However, SOEs were not allowed to make

decisions like profit-oriented companies operating in liberal economic systems. “The state’s plan determined an SOE’s employment, investments, productions, inputs, and sale of outputs” (Lin, 2021, p. 107). All profits of SOEs were taken by the state, funds required for investment and production were provided by the state, and salaries were determined centrally by the state; SOE managers had no discretion in such matters (Lin, 2021, p. 107).

One of the most crucial breaking points for China is undoubtedly the Cultural Revolution. The Cultural Revolution, which was effective between 1966 and 1976, aimed to break all capitalist effects and traditional values (Zilibotti, 2017, p. 961). During the Revolution, ideological conflicts suppressed political and economic development (Hu & Khan, 1997, p. 121). During this period, China witnessed the death of millions of people, many social disintegrations and much more suffering (Jinglian & Shitao, 2015, p. 56).

During this period, China was not a country that had a strong influence on world politics. According to realists, powers determine the positions of states in international relations, and China was a weak country because of its inefficient economic system.

3.1.3. Post-Communist Era

With the death of Mao in 1976, there was a power struggle within the Communist party, and Deng Xiaoping became the new leader of China in 1978. The new rulers of China realized that the Maoist practices had damaged the social system, so they began to make some reforms to restore political and economic order (Naughton, 2008, pp. 93-94). These changes have been a turning point for China (Chow, 2004; Zilibotti, 2017, p. 946).

Reforms were initiated by an authoritarian political administration, and the economy was completely shaped by the Communist Party of China (Naughton, 2008). At this

point, the liberalization process takes place without democratization in China (Zilibotti, 2017, p. 946). The Communist Party of China, which preserved its power during the transformation, is still the organizer of economic, political, and sociological spheres.

The reforms began with the constitution of the house system as an alternative to the commune system in agriculture (Chow, 2004, p. 129; Freeman, 2015, p. 105; Zilibotti, 2017, p. 963). In this system, farmers sell the number of products determined by the state to the state at a fixed price, while they also have permission to sell remained surplus products in the free market (Freeman, 2015, p. 105; Zilibotti, 2017, p. 963; Lin, 2021, p. 107). During this period, farmers were granted the right to rent land and employ workers (Harvey, 2005, p. 126). With the spread of this system, the transition to a partial free market economy started in the field of agriculture.

Liberalization in agriculture increased agricultural outputs and rural income levels in a short period (Chow, 2004, p. 129; Jinglian & Shitao, 2015, p. 57; Freeman, 2015, p. 105; Zilibotti, 2017, p. 963). This boom in agriculture production and developments in the rural led to the establishment of enterprises called township and village enterprises (TVEs), where non-agricultural goods were produced (Freeman, 2015, p. 105).

As emphasized by Goodhart & Xu (1996), TVEs are collective business entities that are not financially supported and protected by the government, do not offer job guarantees for workers and managers, and are not prevented from bankruptcy by the protection of the state. They belonged to the villagers who founded them. Although many TVEs went bankrupt in the 1989-1990 recession, TVEs were generally successful in China (Goodhart & Xu, 1996). At this point, TVEs were one of the effective tools for transforming a communist economy, which does not have a capital owner class, into a market economy. According to Harvey (2005), rural incomes and outputs increased around 14 per cent annually until 1984 (Harvey, 2005, p. 126). This

system was impressively fruitful, so its scope was expanded to state economic enterprises (SOEs) (Lin, 2021, p. 107).

In the early stages of the transformation, politicians made some changes to increase the decision-making abilities of SOEs (Jinglian & Shitao, 2015, pp. 55-56). The central planning system was loosened, and SOEs were given some autonomy in sales, production and innovation (Chow, 2004, p. 130). This model, which was initially tested on six pilot enterprises, started to be implemented in 6600 enterprises after two years (Chow, 2004, p. 130; Jinglian & Shitao, 2015, pp. 56-57). SOEs also gained the right to have the remaining surplus value if they filled the production quotas determined in the Five Years Development Plans (Freeman, 2015, p. 105). In addition, SOEs gained the right to evaluate their employees' performance and dismiss them from employment (Freeman, 2015, p. 105). By the late 1990s, China started to sell some small and medium-sized SOEs to their managers and employees (Chow, 2004, p. 131). In addition to these changes in the state sector, the private sector began to develop in China, and the existence of the private economy was legally recognized in 1987 (Jinglian & Shitao, 2015, pp. 56-57).

In addition to changes in the public sector, China implemented the open-door policy in order to open its closed economy so as to foreign trade and investment (Chow, 2004, p. 131). With the opening of special economic zones (SEZs), foreign direct investments have been encouraged (Hu & Khan, 1997, p. 118). SEZs were more autonomous and flexible regarding management, with many exemptions regarding "labor markets, FDI, ownership of firms, and export controls" (Zilibotti, 2017, p. 964). The number of SEZs, which was 4 in 1980, reached 14 in 1984, and this number has increased gradually (Jinglian & Shitao, 2015, p. 58; Zilibotti, 2017, p. 964). After opening to foreign trade, the foreign trade volume, which constituted 7 per cent of China's national income in 1978, became 25 per cent in 1987 and 37 per cent of its GDP in 1998 (Chow, 2004, p. 131). Exporting was supported by the state (Chow, 2004, p. 132). In this respect, foreign investments, which were less than \$1 billion in 1978, reached around \$30 billion in 1998 (Chow, 2004, p. 132). In 2002, FDI

generated more than 40 per cent of the GDP of China, which became a focal point of multinational companies (Harvey, 2005, p. 135). China has become more open to the outside world and more dependent on foreign investors and foreign trade.

Instead of Big Bang Reforms, which were implemented in post-Soviet countries and caused to change existing regimes and prevent possible reverts in the system, the Communist Party of China gradually carried out reforms to preserve the political regime; they followed a cautious path to reverse possible mistakes and guarantee the survival of the Communist Party (Naughton, 2008, p. 96). In this respect, their transition from a planned economy to a partial market economy was gradual and slow (Chow, 2004, p. 128).

China began to show characteristics of both a command economy and a market economy simultaneously. (Jinglian & Shitao, 2015, p. 58). Unlike economists, China's market economy perception is a state-controlled market, where the state supports investment in sectors that deems important for growth and prevents investment in other sectors (Chow, 2004, pp. 132-133).

To sum up, while the shock therapy method, which was supported by the Washington Consensus, IMF, and World Bank, was applied in the post-Soviet countries that caused economic disasters in these countries; China, which created its own way of privatization, succeeded in creating a successful state-controlled market economy (Harvey, 2005, p. 122). By the mid-1980s, one-third of the industrial production in China was produced by the non-state sector (Jinglian & Shitao, 2015, p. 58).

China increased its import and export with the managed floating exchange rate system, which was applied between 1994 and 1997, and Beijing reinforced this situation with its participation in the WTO in 2001, this participation caused to reduce of protectionist measures in foreign trade and fully participated in the world market (Jinglian & Shitao, 2015, p.64).

If it is looked at the overall picture, China has made an epochal breakthrough in a very short time. The economy of China grew by 9% between 1979 and 1990; and by 10.4% between 1990 and 2010 (Lin, 2011, p. 213). While the per capita income was 82 dollars in 1979, this figure reached 5444 dollars in 2011¹⁰ (Lin, 2015, p. 77). In 2021, it was calculated as 12,556 USD (World Bank, n.d.-c).

Some scholars argue that China will overtake the US by 2035 to become the largest economy in the world (Lau, 2019, p. 188). Even if this prediction does not come true, China is currently the world's second country in terms of both economic size and military spending and the largest in terms of population. According to offensive structural realism, China is expected to use its latent power to increase its military power in the current situation. The main reason for this argument is the survival desire of the states, on which all realist schools agree. The international system is anarchic (Layne, 1994, p. 11; Mearsheimer, 1994/95, p. 10; Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 30; Dunne & Schmidt, 2011, p. 87; Bell, 2017, p. 2). In this anarchic structure, all states provide their own security (Dunne & Schmidt, 2011, p. 87). As examined in the second chapter of the thesis, the obscurity created by the anarchic system causes insecurity in interstate relations, and insecurity causes fear among states.

Maximizing their power is the only way to increase their probability of survival for states that do not and should not trust anyone to ensure their own security because states never know how much power they need to feel safe (Mearsheimer, 2001; Layne, 2006). For this reason, the most powerful state is the most secure state in the international system.

From the point of view of offensive structural realism, China, like every state, is alone in the international system and must ensure its own security. Due to its enormous growing economy, China has gained more economic resources that it can spend to protect itself. In this case, offensive structural realists expect China to increase its

¹⁰ These values were calculated according to the dollar value in 2015.

military power. Whether China has increased its military power in this direction is the subject of the latter parts of the thesis.

3.2. The Relations between China's Economic Rise and Its Military Rise

Although economic growth rates are not the only indicators used to understand the pace of development of countries, they are crucial indicators. This indicator does not only show the increase in the GDP of states and the income level of their societies but also indirectly points to increases in governmental spending on education, technology, infrastructure, health services and other public expenditures. Defence is also one of the spending items of countries. Military power is acquired with defence spending, and the power can be used for both defensive and offensive purposes. For this reason, defence expenditures are potential offensive expenditures at the same time. Although the name of the war ministries has been changed to the ministries of defence, international relations are still the same, and scales are still extremely sensitive. Owning formidable armies is still a prerequisite for states to act as they please in the international arena.

As mentioned in the previous section, the centre of the world economy is shifting from the West to the East. O'Hanlon & Steinberg argues that the economic growth in the Asian region shows that the resources that Asian states can allocate to their military spending are increasing. But the most striking military growth in the region is taking place in China (O'Hanlon & Steinberg, 2017, p. 28). In their analyse, Atuahene et al. (2020) focus on the relationship between China's gross domestic product and military expenditures from 1995 to 2018. They found one-way causality between economic growth and increases in military expenditures. In this respect, they claim that the economic ascendance of China may cause to increase in its military expenditures (Atuahene et al., 2020).

According to the data of the Ministry of Finance of the People's Republic of China, 1.27 trillion yuan of China's central government budget, which was 3.5 trillion yuan

in 2020, is reserved for the national defence budget (Ministry of Finance, 2020, June 17). If it is taken into account that the average exchange rate in 2020 is 6.8974 RMB for 1 dollar (NBS, February 28, 2021), China's defence budget for 2020 is calculated as 183.8 billion dollars. In this context, China has allocated more than one-third of its central government budget to defence (Ministry of Finance, 2020, June 17).

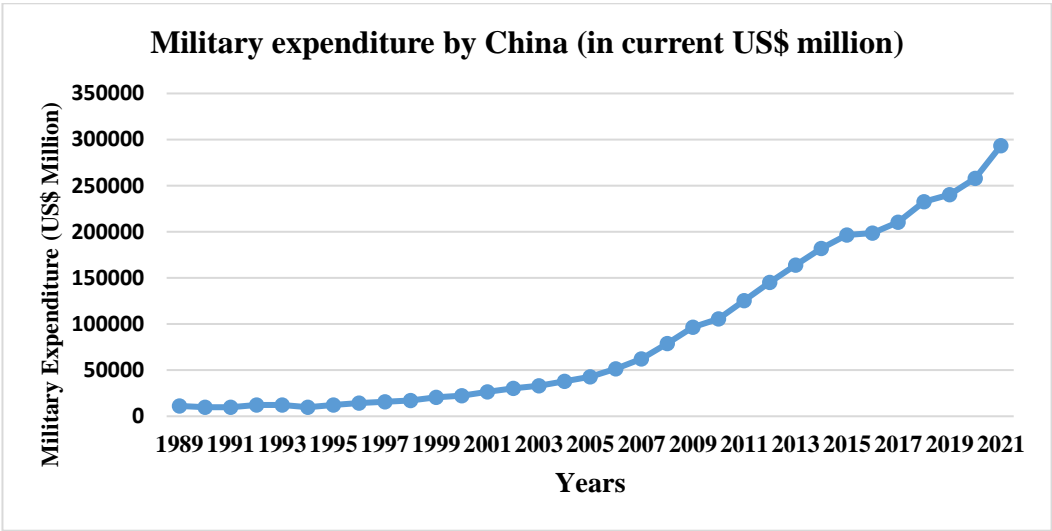


Figure 3. 1: Effect of China’s Economic Rise on Its Policies

Prepared by the author using SIPRI Military Expenditure Database (SIPRI, 2022)

<https://milex.sipri.org/sipri>

Although China claims that its military spending is transparent (SCIO, 2019a, "Comparison of Defense Expenditure in the International Context", para. 7), some analysts claim that China's military expenditures are higher than officially announced because China ignores some important spending items when calculating China's military expenditures, "...such as procurement of foreign weapon systems and equipment" (Chase et al., 2015, p.15). In this context, China's military spending for

2020 is calculated as \$193.3 billion by The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS, 2021, p. 218).

Estimates of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), which is highly respected in the international literature, are higher than the official statistics of China and The International Institute for Strategic Studies data. According to the analysis of SIPRI (2022), the military spending of China reached \$ 293 billion in 2021. Moreover, as shown in *figure 3.1.*, China's military expenditure has increased for 27 years continuously (SIPRI, 2022).

According to the National Bureau of Statistics of China, China's central government expenditure was 551.99 billion Yuan in 2000 (NBS, n.d.). Calculated from the average yuan-dollar exchange rate for 2020, this equates to 80 billion USD. When analyzed numerically, China's central government expenditure in 2000 was 2.3 times less than China's national defence budget in 2020. At this point, we see that the arguments of the offensive structural realists, who claim that states use their economic power to increase their military power (Mearsheimer, 2001), on China's economic rise are justified. The GDP of states determine an upper limit for military spending (Benoit, 1978, pp. 275-276). China's GDP was \$149.54 billion in 1978 (World Bank, n.d.-b); it is less than China's military spending in 2013 (SIPRI, 2022). In this respect, it is clear that the fundamental source of China's military growth is its economic growth. Today, China is not only the second-largest economy but also the second-largest military spender in the world. An economically weak China could not be expected to make the second-largest military expenditure in the world.

3.3. China's Military Modernization

As stated in the study of Blasko (2012), when the People's Republic of China was founded, it had an army of 5.5 million soldiers. The People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) was established in 1949 with ships seized from ex-Nationalists; even its commanders were commanders of land forces when it was founded. People's

Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF), on the other hand, was established in 1949 with aircraft seized from the Nationalists and the Japanese, and the first commander of air forces did not have experience in aviation (Blasko, 2012, pp. 249-250). China does not have sufficient latent power to have a formidable army during Mao's era. Until recently, the People's Liberation Army was inadequate and outdated (Chase et al., 2015, p. 13). However, China's economic transformation has changed this situation.

In the 1980s-90s, critical changes have begun to take place in the People's Liberation Army (Bommakanti & Shivamurthy, 2021, p. 3). After the Gulf War (1990-1991), leaders of the PLA became even more aware of the inadequacy of the army (Chase et al., 2015, p. 14). Despite Iraq's massive loss of equipment and soldiers, the United States' victory with very few casualties caught the attention of the Central Military Commission of the Communist Party of China (CMC), and the PLA prepared a lot of studies about this war (Fravel, 2020, pp. 188-189). One of the main reasons for this victory was the high technology of the US army that involved the integration of all spheres of military conflict, and the PLA realized that China was unprepared for this kind of war (Fravel, 2020, pp. 189-191).

This awareness was supported by the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis and the unintentional bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999, and China decided to develop its military capabilities more rapidly to compete with the United States (Chase et al., 2015, pp. 14-15). In this respect, as emphasized by Fravel (2020), the CMC decided that modernize the PLA according to new wars that will be shaped by high-technological conditions. These arguments were also ossified by NATO's success in Yugoslavia Wars, which was caused by its technological superiority (Fravel, 2020).

In this context, China, which does not have new-generation war technologies, felt extremely vulnerable in the anarchic international system. With the power that has been given by its rising economy, China has started to modernize its army in areas where it sees itself as deficient. According to *China's Military Strategy*, which was

published by The State Council Information Office of the PRC in 2015, China wishes to become a strong and wealthy state by 2049 when it celebrates its 100th anniversary. The Communist Party calls this desire the Chinese Dream. Beijing argues that the efforts to strengthen the army of China as a part of the Chinese Dream because China believes that a country cannot be powerful and safe without having a formidable army (SCIO, 2015, II. “Missions and Strategic Tasks of China's Armed Forces”, para.1). In this respect, China aims to complete the modernization of its army by comprehensively improving its organizational structure, doctrines, military personnel, and weapons by 2035 (SCIO, 2019a, “Continuing to Strengthen the Military in the Chinese Way”, para.4).

China declared that it desires to have a formidable army so as to increase its security and protect its development interests and will never use its power to dominate other nations (SCIO, 2019a; 2019b). However, military power acquired for defensive purposes can also be used for offensive purposes. Just as a person who buys a gun to protect himself can use it to kill someone, a state that is armed to feel safer can also use these weapons to attack other states. For this reason, even if China is sincerely arming for defensive purposes, its neighbouring states will perceive this situation as a threat. As a matter of fact, Russia, Japan, India, South Korea, Singapore, and Vietnam perceive China's development as a threat (Mearsheimer, 2010, p. 390). This situation is an irreversible result of the anarchic international system mentioned in detail in the second chapter of the thesis.

PLA has experienced transformations in equipment, personnel, and doctrine since the 1990s (Chase, 2015, p.13). PLA is trying to move from a personnel-intensive army structure that prioritizes quantity to a technology-intensive army structure that prioritizes quality and efficiency (SCIO, 2011, “History of the PLA's Modernization”, para.3; SCIO, 2019a, “Optimizing Size, Structure and Force Composition”, para.1). The total personnel of the PLA, which was 13.3 million in 1985, decreased to 3,045 million in 2020 (Bommakanti & Shivamurthy, 2021, p.3). In addition to this downsizing, the PLA is also developing its human resources; for

example, university graduates are increasingly preferred in recruitment to the army (Bommakanti & Shivamurthy, 2021, p.11). This shows that China wants to make its military more professional.

Within the scope of the reforms, the PLA's army structure, command and leadership system and structure of the Central Military Commission have changed (SCIO, 2019a, "Reforming the Leadership and Command System"). PLA also aims to increase military readiness and combat capability against security threats (SCIO, 2019a, "Implementing the Military Strategic Guideline for a New Era", para. 3.). In this respect, the Army regularly make joint exercises that involve real combat conditions (SCIO, 2019a, "Carrying Out Military Training in Real Combat Conditions", para.2). China's initiatives to modernize its land armies will play a key role in strengthening its military. Although the navy and air forces are advanced today, wars are always won on the land (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 56).

In today's world, the navy is one of the important preconditions to having a formidable army. Especially for overseas projections, having a strong navy is too crucial. In this context, the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has the largest navy in terms of quantity, and the total number of ships in the Chinese navy is expected to rise to 460 by 2030 and become an even larger navy (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2021, p. 49). Moreover, China is the largest battleship producer (Khanna, 2019, p. 5). According to the study by Khanna (2019), China also has started to produce Type 055 Destroyer, which is one of the largest destroyers in the world. The PLAN also completed the construction of the first domestic aircraft carrier (Type 001A) that construction had begun in 2015, at an unprecedented pace in 2018 (Khanna, 2019, p. 2-3). They are continuing to produce lots of frigates and corvettes (Khanna, 2019, p. 2-5). China also continues to build a second domestic aircraft carrier (OSD, 2021, p. 49). PLAN also focused on constructing new submarines and modernizing their own submarines; they constructed 12 nuclear submarines in 15 years (OSD, 2021, p. 49). Having a strong navy is an extremely costly business; the construction cost of each Type 055 Destroyer is 920 million USD (Descalsota, 2022).

As can be understood from its navy modernization, rising China is transforming its latent power into military power. A state that is not economically strong is unlikely to spend that much money on building a navy.

China's navy modernization plan is not limited to increasing the number and quality of ships. China also develops its overseas infrastructure and strengthens its overseas operation capacity to protect its overseas interests (SCIO, 2010, "Building of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Second Artillery Force", para.3; SCIO, 2019a, "Protecting China's Overseas Interests", para.2). PLAN also strengthens its capacities of strategic deterrence, counterattack, joint operations and counterattack within the scope of its modernization (SCIO, 2015, "IV. Building and Development of China's Armed Forces", para.4; SCIO, 2019, "Reshuffled PLA and PAP Troops", para.2.).

All of these indicate that China's naval forces will continue to grow, and China will have a more magnificent navy in the near future. It means that China's power and ability to act will also increase over the distant seas. This situation would also improve China's capacity to launch amphibious landings and carry troops and munitions overseas. It is a threat not only to Taiwan but also to the United States, which has military bases in the Philippines and Guam. Moreover, the strengthening Chinese navy may cause China to overcome the stopping power of water in a scenario where China builds overseas military bases in different geographies of the world.

Today, critical controversies exist over exclusive economic zone rights and resource extraction in Spratly waters in the South China Sea (Ji, 2019, p. 72). China is increasingly seeking to expand its sovereignty over the South China Sea, which is strategically important for the Asia-Pacific region (Grossman, 2020, pp. 183-184). At this point, China wants to turn the Spratly islands, which cause serious debates among the states of the region, into strategic military zones which belong to it (Grossman, 2020, pp. 183-184). Under this purpose, China enlarges the area of the islands by landfilling on the sea (Jingdong, 2019, p. 111; Grossman, 2020, pp. 183-184), and

they construct military facilities, like radars and anti-air missile batteries, on these islands (Jingdong, 2019, p. 111). Even though it is peacetime, China also constructs new airstrips in the South China Sea, which can be used as bases in Indian Ocean operations (Ji, 2019, p. 74). Although these developments can be interpreted as a defensive measure for China, which is surrounded by overseas US military bases, it is perceived as a threat by its neighbours as this situation excessively increases the power projection of the Chinese army in the region.

The air force, which powerful states invest intensively, has a crucial role in supporting ground operations, making military shipments to distant regions, and inflicting vital damage on the enemies in war zones. In this context, The People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) is also being modernized within the scope of its military modernization (SCIO, 2010; Chase et al., 2015; SCIO, 2015; SCIO, 2019a; OSD, 2021). In accordance with this purpose, PLA is developing in the field of early warning, air attack, air defence, missile defence, and air operations within the scope of modernization (SCIO, 2015, SCIO, 2019a, "IV. Building and Development of China's Armed Forces", para.5; SCIO, 2019a, "Reshuffled PLA and PAP Troops", para.3).

According to the Office of the Secretary of Defence of the United States (2021), PLAAF and PLAN Aviation have the world's third largest air inventory with more than 2,800 aircraft, of which approximately 2,250 are warplanes (OSD, 2021, p. 55). According to the *Military Balance 2021*, which is prepared by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, there were 1,820 fighters and ground-attack aircraft and 896 other types of military aircraft in the PLAAF inventory (IISS, 2021, p.28). Although the modernization process of the PLAAF continues, there are lots of older fighters in the inventory of the Chinese air force (Chase et al., 2015, p. 16). For this reason, it may be misleading to compare the air force with other countries only in terms of quantity. However, it is obvious that China will have a large air force with its increasing economic power.

As cited above, since the beginning of the 1990s, there have been significant paradigm shifts in the perception of war among the leaders of the Chinese Army. The People's Liberation Army argues that mechanized armies are replaced by informationized armies, in which information technology plays a key role (SCIO, 2013). As emphasized by The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China (2019), the developing technology has revealed new advanced technological fields day by day. The internet of things, artificial intelligence, quantum information, and big data are becoming very important for army technologies (SCIO, 2019a). In this respect, technological superiority is increasingly becoming a prerequisite for winning wars.

The People's Liberation Army tries to technologically develop itself in order to be ready for informationized wars (SCIO, 2011; SCIO, 2013). It has started to invest in cutting-edge technologies such as quantum computers, artificial intelligence (Bommakanti & Shivamurthy, 2021, p.8; OSD, 2021), autonomous systems, and biotechnology (OSD, 2021). The military strategists of the Chinese army also attach great importance to real-time surveillance, reconnaissance, and warning system, which involve communication, intelligent and navigation satellites, and warning systems (OSD, 2021). These systems increase PLA's capacity to find and follow enemy forces (OSD, 2021).

China also sees cyberspace as an important field for its national security and economic and social development, so PLA also aims to increase its capacity in the field of cyber security (SCIO, 2019a, "Safeguarding Interests in Major Security Fields, para. 3"). In addition, China also developed anti-satellite weapons (ASAT) (Dreyer, 2012, p. 292; Bommakanti & Shivamurthy, 2021, p.18). Anti-satellite weapons are used to interrupt states' ability to collect intelligence and launch direct attacks (Zissiz, February 22, 2007). This technology can also use against global positioning satellites (GPS) to interrupt the basic daily routines of people, such as telephone communication, financial transactions etc. (Zissiz, February 22, 2007). Anti-satellite weapons are extremely deterrent against aggressors, but they can also

be used for offensive purposes. A state that has lost communication between its armies may suffer great destruction on the battlefield. Moreover, it may become unable to defend its homeland.

China has also made many breakthroughs in unmanned vehicles; it has developed the high-speed WJ-700 drone and the Desert Wolf, which is an unmanned ground vehicle capable of transporting goods and wounded soldiers (Bommakanti & Shivamurthy, 2021, p.9). All these changes point to the perception of technological warfare in the Chinese army. In this century, China's understanding of superiority based on the number of soldiers has left its place in the doctrine of technological superiority. As a result of these innovations, the PLA is becoming more and more dangerous for regional states, especially Taiwan.

People's Liberation Army Second Artillery Force (PLASAF) is also developing within the scope of the modernization process; it is trying to increase its fast reaction, precision strike, damage infliction, survival, and preservation capacities (SCIO, 2011, "Building of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Second Artillery Force, para.5"). China is increasing its ballistic missiles not only in quality but also in quantity. In 2020, China tested more than 250 ballistic missiles (Bommakanti & Shivamurthy, 2021, p.19). In this respect, China's capacity to destroy its enemies from afar is increasing. These developments indicate that China may be perceived as a military threat not only by its neighbours but also by other states that are located far from China.

Nuclear weapons are the most destructive weapons in the world, so they have an important place in the military strategies of countries. They are generally seen as a lifesaver for countries by defensive realists. According to Waltz "nuclear weapons deter nuclear weapons; they also serve to limit escalation (Waltz, 1979, p. 188). The main reason for this is the assertion that a nuclear state cannot be completely occupied by other countries because, in such a scenario, the nuclear country may use its nuclear weapons against the aggressor country to cause enormous damage to this country. Since a war between two different nuclear countries will cause a great disaster, it is

thought that nuclear countries cannot fight against each other, especially by the defensive realists. China is also one of the nuclear states in the world. It tested the first atomic bomb in 1964 and then declared the "no first use principle" (Blasko, 2012). China still continues to comply with this policy (SCIO, 2015; Kristensen & Korda, 2021, p. 323). However, this does not mean that China will follow this policy in the future. Because of the anarchical nature of the international system, states cannot know how other states will act in the future (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 32). For this reason, states should consider the worst-case scenario and act accordingly.

China obtained the first hydrogen bomb in 1967, the first capacity to hit the US mainland in 1981, and the first submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) in 1982 (Blasko, 2012). It can be said that China has nuclear deterrence, considering all these developments. Kristensen & Korda (2021) emphasize that China is the world's third largest nuclear power. It is estimated to have around 350 operational warheads. Although China continues to produce new warheads and continue its nuclear modernization program, its nuclear power is still not able to compete with Russia and the United States (Kristensen & Korda, 2021, p. 318).

According to China's Military Strategy (China's white paper that was published in 2015), China aims to have nuclear deterrence capability; they see nuclear forces are strategic weapons that are important for their sovereignty and security (SCIO, 2015, "Force Development in Critical Security Domains, para.4"). In this respect, the PLA tries to increase its early warning and rapid reaction capacities to deter other countries from using nuclear weapons against China (SCIO, 2015, "Force Development in Critical Security Domains, para.4"). Chinese leaders emphasize the importance of having an adequate second-strike capability to deter attacks on China from past to present (Kristensen & Korda, 2021, p. 322). Second-strike capability refers to the ability of a country to hit the aggressor country with nuclear weapons, even if it has come under successful massive nuclear attacks that destroy its military facilities. Second-strike capability is usually acquired by the nuclear armament of submarines whose locations cannot be detected. As cited before, the PLAN constructed 12

nuclear submarines in 15 years (OSD, 2021, p. 49), and they have owned submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) since 1982 (Blasko, 2012). Even if the nuclear weapons on its mainland are destroyed by attacks of this aggressor, China has the capacity to attack the aggressor state with nuclear weapons. China continues to modernize its nuclear powers.

3.4. The Effects of China's Military Rise on the International System

In summary, China, which has grown economically, has also grown and continues to grow in terms of military. China, whose army continues to modernize in terms of personnel quality, weapons, vehicles and technology, is developing hi-tech military equipment. China also continues to increase its capacity in nuclear, cyber and space fields. In this context, China is becoming more secure and deterrent against external threats gradually.

All these military developments stem from China's economic rise. China transforms its economic power into military power by spending military expenditures. Although China currently spends about three times less than the US, it has the capacity to quickly turn its current economic accumulation into military power thanks to its developing technology and its strong economy. The origin of this capacity is again rooted in China's rapidly growing economy. For this reason, the Chinese economic rise conflicts with the interests of the Asia-Pacific states and the United States.

The people's Republic of China wants to be a wealthy and powerful country by 2049, the 100th anniversary of its foundation (SCIO, 2015). According to its official claims, the main purpose of China's desire for power is due to its security concern and its willingness to protect its gains in the international arena. Although China claims that "the Chinese nation does not have the gene to invade others and dominate the world" (SCIO, 2019b, "5. China will never seek hegemony", para. 2), its military modernization is perceived by other states as offensive. The reason for the emergence of this fear is not the rise of the People's Republic of China but the rise of a new actor

in the system. While the Asia-Pacific states fear the emergence of a superpower, which they cannot balance among themselves, the United States fears the rise of a new regional hegemon that could push itself out of the Asia-Pacific region.

This dichotomy stems from the uncertain nature of international relations. As explained in detail in the second chapter of the thesis, offensive structural realists argue that the international system is anarchic, so there is no higher authority to protect states from the aggression of each other (Mearsheimer, 1994/95; 2001; 2006b). In such a system, it is unpredictable how states will act in the future, and this unpredictability causes fear and security concerns because states have the capacity to harm and even destroy each other (Mearsheimer, 1994/95; 2001; 2006a). For this reason, states whose main purpose is to survive should maximize their power (Labs, 1997; Mearsheimer, 1994/95; 2001, 2006b; Noguchi, 2011). Since the most powerful state will be the safest state in the system, states desire to become a hegemon (Mearsheimer, 1994/95; Layne, 2002). In this respect, states do not miss any opportunity to change the balance of power in their favour. They do not hesitate to increase their power when it is possible. According to offensive structural realism, even if a state has no opportunity to become a hegemon, it wants to increase its power in order to feel safer; because states do not join a war that they are not able to win. Accordingly, more powerful states have a higher chance of deterring their opponents from possible aggression.

According to offensive structural realists, this dangerous nature of international relations constrains the behaviour of states (Mearsheimer, 2001). System conditions work the same for every state. This situation pushes every state to behave the same. According to their views, it is not the rise of China that jeopardizes the current international system but the overpowering of a new state in the system. Offensive structural realists read the rise of China through this picture.

As a result of this theoretical framework, offensive structural realists argue that China wants to be a hegemon in its region (Mearsheimer, 2006b; Noguchi, 2011; Layne,

2012); because regional hegemon China will be safer than China which has many superpower neighbours. If every state also wants to be a hegemon in its essence, it can be asked why offensive structural realists argue that China's desire to be a hegemon is too crucial for the current situation of international relations. The main reason for this is the excessive growth of China.

As mentioned in the previous sections, the Chinese economy is rapidly growing. Moreover, China is a country that is able to transform its economic power into military power because of its immense population, technological and industrial growth. As it is discussed in the previous section, China is rapidly and effectively transforming its latent power into military power. It has modernized its army and explains the details of its military modernization plan in its white papers. According to State Council of the People's Republic of China (2019a):

The strategic goals for the development of China's national defense and military in the new era are:

- to generally achieve mechanization by the year 2020 with significantly enhanced informationization and greatly improved strategic capabilities;
- to comprehensively advance the modernization of military theory, organizational structure, military personnel, and weaponry and equipment in step with the modernization of the country and basically complete the modernization of national defense and the military by 2035; and
- to fully transform the people's armed forces into world-class forces by the mid-21st century (SCIO, 2019a, "Continuing to Strengthen the Military in the Chinese Way", para. 3).

In line with these goals, China continues to allocate a part of its rising economy to military spending.

However, the US is the most powerful state and the single regional hegemon in the system (Mearsheimer, 2001; 2006b; 2010; Shifrisson, 2022, p.99). It has also a dominant position in the Asia-Pacific region. Regional hegemon endeavours to hinder the emergence of new hegemons in other regions because the emergence of a new hegemon certainly harms the interests of the existing hegemon (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 141-142; Mearsheimer, 2010, p. 388). International politics is a zero-sum game; increasing the power of a state leads to decreasing the powers of another state

(Mearsheimer, 2001). For this reason, according to offensive structural realists, the US will not allow China to become a regional hegemon (Mearsheimer, 2006b; 2010; 2011). Because if China becomes a regional hegemon, it will both prevent the US from intervening in the Asia Pacific and act against the interests of the US in other geographies of the world. This situation may lead to conflicts and even wars in the system. In short, according to offensive structural realists, the world is too small for two hegemons.

According to offensive structural realists, another problem for the system is that rising China can act more offensively to strengthen its security and become a hegemon (Hancock & Lobell, 2010, pp. 146-149). The historical basis of this argument is that Nazi Germany, the United States, and the Soviet Union, which were the rising powers in the past, tried to dominate other countries (Roy, 1994, p. 160; Fravel, 2010, pp. 506-507). Offensive structural realism applies this historical rule to the case of a newly rising great power in the system. Since they argue that state behaviour is limited by the system, they think that China, which has risen in its region, will behave aggressively like Imperial Germany, Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, and the Soviet Union (Mearsheimer, 2006b, p. 161). The rise of these states resulted in two world wars and a cold war. In this context, they argue that the rise of China may cause a war similar to the Cold War or a hegemonic war between the US and China (Glaser, 2011, p. 81).

China is the most powerful state in its region today. Asia-Pacific States do not have enough power to balance China without help from the US (Mearsheimer, 2011, p. 33). Determining whether China has followed a more aggressive stance in its foreign policy because of its increasing power is crucial for testing offensive structural realist arguments. At this point, the thesis examines the Taiwan problem, which is accepted that a sign of China's desire for hegemony because it follows intensively aggressive foreign policies against Taiwan. Then, the Belt and Road Initiative, which is considered one of the biggest signs that China can develop peacefully, is analysed. All these analyses will be conducted within the framework of offensive structural

realism. However, before starting these analyses, it would be useful to address the points that offensive structural realists accept as offensive in China's ascension period policies and refer to China's official statements about these policies.

According to Cardona (2019), China is acting aggressively in the South China Sea dispute. It has built artificial islands in the region and has armed these islands. This situation is a direct challenge to the status quo in the Asia-Pacific region (Cardona, 2019, p. 78). These artificial islands promote the security of China's coastline. This situation also increases the PLAN's range of motion in the Indian Ocean. In this respect, it is thought that strengthening China will act more aggressively in order to solve the problems in the South China Sea with its neighbour states; and this situation will bring military conflicts (He & Liu, 2022, p. 448).

In addition to this situation, China opened its first overseas military base in Djibouti (Cardona, 2019, p. 78; Dreyfuss & Karlin, 2019, p.4). China's military base in Djibouti enables China to operate even beyond the Indian Ocean and makes the African continent safer to trade (Dutton, Kardon, & Kennedy, 2020, p.2). As discussed in the previous section, China is modernizing its navy, and China's navy needs supply points to move into transoceanic regions. According to OSD (2021), China is trying to strengthen its overseas logistics infrastructure to increase its military power projection. For this purpose, China will want to establish overseas bases not only in Djibouti but also in many countries. OSD argues that China does not only want to build overseas bases but also acquire military facilities so as to support its air, ground and space power projections. In this respect, China may aim to build military facilities in Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Angola etc. (OSD, 2021, p.X). Considering China's naval modernization and aggressive policies in the South China Sea, it is possible that China will also try to acquire other overseas bases in varieties geographies of the world. All these military-oriented policies raise the question of whether China is trying to be a hegemon.

As will be discussed in the following chapters in detail, the Taiwan issue is also a subject that is frequently cited as an example of China's aggressive policies by offensive structural realists. The Taiwan question has a privileged position in China's foreign policy (Noguchi, 2011, p. 73). Realists claim that if Taiwan declares its independence, China will probably declare war on Taiwan (Glaser, 2011, p. 86; Noguchi, 2011, p. 73). It should be noted parenthetically that the capacities of states determine their policies. In this respect, according to realists, as China gains power, its desire to annex Taiwan will intensify.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is another topic that offensive realists have analysed. Layne (2018) argues that the Belt and Road Initiative aims to encourage the economic development of Asia by constructing transportation hubs between markets and raw material suppliers in some parts of Asia, Africa, and Europe continents. The BRI is seen by some people as a project which aims to increase China's influence in Eurasia (Layne, 2018, p. 101). China seems to increase its economic power enormously with this project in the long run. Since wealth can easily be transformed into the military (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 144), this project is also considered hegemony-oriented by realists. According to them, the BRI is a challenge for the US-dominated international system (Huwaidin & Antwi-Boateng, 2021, p. 9) and aims to make China a hegemon (Napang, Nurhasanah & Rohman, 2019).

As mentioned in previous sections of this chapter, China's military power is developing fast. According to offensive structural realists, this development should be a sign of China's aggressive policies toward other countries (Hancock & Lobell, 2010, p. 156; Noguchi, 2011, p. 63). China, which wants to become invulnerable in its region, will try to excessively impress its neighbours and push the US out of the region when it reaches this capacity (Mearsheimer, 2006b, p. 162; Mearsheimer, 2010, p.389). According to offensive structural realists, China's military rise and current foreign policies show that China has begun to take an aggressive stance. They argue that rising China will feel more motivated to solve its problems with other states through military means in the future.

The rise of China also has effects on the US, which is the dominant power in the system. Layne (2012b) argues that after World War II, the unipolar international system dominated by the United States became the reality of world politics. During this time, the United States built an international order and became its leader. The leadership and hegemonic position of the US were based on its unchallengeable military force and immense economic power. Layne (2012b) calls this period Pax-Americana, and he claims that the Pax-Americana began to end with the rise of China. With the Great Recession, it has become evident that the economically hegemonic position of the US has started to disappear. Therefore, Layne (2012b) expects that the military superiority of the US, which is a pillar of its dominant position, will also begin to erode if its economic difficulties continue. Since the US will cut its military spending, China will seize the opportunity to close its military gap with the US (Layne, 2012b, pp. 203-210). Therefore, the rise of China is a direct threat to the United States' position in the system.

As He & Liu (2022) assert in their recent study, under the second term of the Obama Administration, the United States started to apply rebalancing strategies in Asia. With the beginning of the Trump Administration, competition between the United States and China intensified and turned into a trade war (He & Liu, 2022, p. 452). According to offensive structural realism, the main reason for this policy is that the current hegemon does not want the emergence of a new hegemon in the system. Since China's quest for regional hegemony threatens the dominant position of the US, the US assume China as an enemy. United States Secretary of State Antony John Blinken's speech at George Washington University in May 2022 showed that this perception continues to dominate the United States' perception of the ascendance of China.

In his speech, Blinken argues that China is a country that is not only trying to shape the international system but also will be able to achieve this due to its power. Blinken stated that China is a threat to the universal values that have ensured the progress of the world for over 75 years. He also emphasized that the United States will not

hesitate to face off with China to protect its interests (The U.S. Department of State, 2022).

As can be seen from this speech, the US sees its own interests as parallel with the interests of other states and claims that China is the only threat to the system. Blinken's speech reflects the hegemonic position of the United States. The untouchable position of the US has enabled it to shape the rules in international relations over decades. The United States does not want to lose this privileged position; thus, it does not want China to become stronger. At this point, this desire of the US to protect its superior position in international relations is a threat to China's security, development and growth. China may also see the current system, which is shaped by the United States, as a threat to itself; because the US is the most powerful state on earth and is willing to compete with China. In consequence, there are many reasons in the system that also push China to fear.

3.5. China's International System Perception

After Blinken's speech, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (2022) published an article called *Reality Check: Falsehoods in US Perceptions of China*. According to this article, Blinken's speech aims to inflame China Threat perception and contain China. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2022) emphasised that the international system which the United States promised to protect does not serve other states' interests. It is serving the interest of the United States and protecting its hegemonic position. Contrary to the United States' point of view, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (2022) argues that the US is a disruptive factor to the system instead of China. Ministry of Foreign Affairs also claims that over the past 240 years of US history, the US did not at war for only 16 years. In this context, the US has started or participated in overseas wars such as the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Afghanistan War, and the Iraq War during its hegemonic period (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2022).

As analysed in the second chapter, the continents are separated by large bodies of water in the world, and these large bodies of water have the power to stop the military projections of states (Mearsheimer, 2001). The Pacific Ocean, which is the largest ocean, separates mainland of China and the United States. China and America must overcome the stopping power of water in order to pose a threat of invasion against each other because only land forces can be used to invade other states' territories (Mearsheimer, 2001).

The US, which has military bases in almost 100 different countries, also has many military bases around the Asia-Pacific region (Dreyfuss & Karlin, 2019; Huwaidin & Antwin-Boateng, 2021, pp. 9-10). These bases serve to transfer America's formidable military power to overseas geographies. In this respect, the US military has extensive power projection that is able to fight everywhere in the world (Mearsheimer, 2010, p. 385). US military bases in Guam, the Philippines, North Korea, and Japan make mainland China accessible to the United States. Apart from that, the US is ahead of China in terms of navy technology. It is clear that the US, which has the air force superiority that can support its navy in terms of security, will dominate the Pacific Ocean in a possible war. In addition to these, the US allied with many Asia-Pacific states. In a possible war, the US can carry out a direct ground attack on the territory of its allies. While the US has absolute superiority in respect of conducting a possible attack, it does not seem possible for China to attack the US mainland with its current military power.

Indeed, if China's current situation is analysed according to arguments of offensive structural realism, it will be seen that the hegemonic position of the United States is a vital threat to China's security. China has only begun to catch up with the US economically; it still falls far behind the US in technology, military, and other areas (He & Liu, 2022, p. 450). In this respect, while the United States worry about the power that China may reach in the future, China is afraid of the current power of the US. The rules of anarchical international structure that affect the policies of the

United States are also valid for China, so the People's Republic of China sees the US as a threat to its growing economy and security.

In its white paper called *China's National Defense in the New Era*, The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China (SCIO) (2019a) argues that the unilateral policies of the US increased competition between world states. They also claim that this situation caused that states to increase their defence expenditures, and develop nuclear and strategic weapons. In this context, SCIO emphasizes that NATO continues to expand its sphere, and the US, Russia, Germany, Japan, France, the United Kingdom, and India make arrangements to strengthen their militaries. In this direction, China has started to modernize its army too. They aim to create a world-class army by the middle of the century (SCIO, 2019a, "Continuing to Strengthen the Military in the Chinese Way").

China repeatedly argues that it follows defensive policies in its white papers (SCIO, 2019a; 2019b). According to these white papers, China argues that it needs a strong army in order to protect its international status, national security and development interest (SCIO, 2019b, "1. Promoting world peace and development through our own development", para.5). China perceives a strong military as a precondition for guaranteeing its peaceful development (SCIO, 2019a). According to SCIO, strengthening PLA is also serving world peace and common security (SCIO, 2019a, "Continuing to Strengthen the Military in the Chinese Way", para.2; SCIO, 2019b, "1. Promoting world peace and development through our own development", para.5).

SCIO (2019a) states that competition and uncertainty have increased in Asia-Pacific due to the shifting of the world economy to the region. Moreover, the United States is increasing its military presence and strengthening its relationship with its allies. Apart from these developments, there are many factors that China perceives as a threat in the region. China's military modernization aims to eliminate these threats and conducts in parallel with this goal. According to SCIO (2019a), China's new security policy aims to deter possible aggressions, ensure political and social security,

prevent Taiwan's independence, prevent the separation of Tibet and East Turkistan, protect its overseas interests, and support sustainable development. In addition, China claims that the South China Sea islands and Senkaku/Diaoyu islands are its own territories and wishes to protect its interests in these controversial areas. Although China arms these regions, it emphasizes that it wants to solve the problems by peaceful methods. In addition, China, which has repeatedly expressed its sensitivity to the Taiwan issue and regards this issue as a domestic matter, states that it will not hesitate to use force if Taiwan declares independence (SCIO, 2019, “Resolutely Safeguarding China’s Sovereignty, Security and Development Interests”).

South China Sea Islands, the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and Taiwan are crucial for China to protect its coastline, secure its overseas trade, and benefit from the natural resources in these regions. However, disputes on these islands need to be resolved on bilateral or multilateral grounds because they concern the different states in the region. Although China states that it wants to solve the problems peacefully, it follows unilateral policies on these issues. This situation is not only causing serious security problems in the region but also flaming claims that the strengthening of China pushes it to seek hegemony.

Although China claims that its military development has defensive characteristics, according to offensive structural realism, any state that rises is a threat to other states in the system. As examined before, the theory emphasizes that all states want to be hegemons to secure themselves. It can be inferred that China tends to act aggressively at the points that it perceives as a threat to its security and development interests, even from its official statements. Of course, the pressure created by the US's Asia-Pacific policies affects China's political acts on these issues. However, this reason does not weaken the claims that China seeks hegemony.

China has also responded to arguments that it seeks hegemony in its white papers in depth. According to SCIO (2019b), the historical fact that the strengthening states sought hegemony in the past does not mean that China seeks hegemony. In this

context, China will never try to be a hegemon and will not invade and dominate other states. Referring to the invasions of the Western states to China in the 19th century, China emphasizes that it will not cause this pain to any nation (SCIO, 2019b, “5. China will never seek hegemony”).

Emphasizing that international stability and peace are important for its growth, China claims that its economic growth is also an opportunity for the system (SCIO, 2019b). In this respect, SCIO emphasizes that China contributed over 28 per cent of world economic growth between the 2013-2018 period (SCIO, 2019b, “II. China’s Development Is an Opportunity for the World”). Belt and Road Initiative is also international development cooperation which supports peace, prosperity and innovation by encouraging development in fields of infrastructure, trade and finance between countries (SCIO, 2021, “2. China’s Approaches to Development Cooperation”, para.5).

In light of all these arguments, it can be said that China considers its military modernization essential for its security and development. Even though China argues that its army has developed for defensive purposes, it draws an offensive image with its military manoeuvres and border violations against Taiwan and its rapid armament efforts in the South China Sea. Even if it is accepted claims that China is carrying out all these moves for defensive purposes against the US's activities that threaten China in the region and China will never seek hegemony, the future cannot be predicted in international relations. China can use its military power, which is developed to prospect world peace, for offensive purposes in the future, and it can decide to become a hegemon as soon as achieving hegemony is possible for it.

3.6. The United States and the Rise of China

Offensive structural realists accept that the hegemony desire of states is rooted in the anarchical characteristic of the system, and it is valid for all states in the system (Mearsheimer, 2001). As analysed in the second chapter of the thesis, realists

perceive world politics as a zero-sum game. In this respect, the rise of a state means the decline of some other states. Rising a great power in a region may conclude with the emergence of a regional hegemon. This situation not only causes reducing power and wealth of its neighbours but also causes them to feel less secure. Because the hegemon has the ability to follow unilateral and aggressive policies, dominate other nations, and even annex their territories. In light of these arguments, offensive structural realists claim that the rising of great power is dangerous for its neighbours.

As stated in the previous sections, the only regional hegemon is the United States in the current international system, and regional hegemon endeavours to avoid the emergence of new hegemons in other geographies because emerging of a new hegemon may disturb the balance of power (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 141-142; Mearsheimer, 2010, p. 388). In this respect, the regional hegemon prefers a scenario where two or more regional great power located in each region; because if there is more than one great power in a region, they cannot threaten the regional hegemon in another geography; they will deal with each other first (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 141).

As examined in the second chapter of the thesis, Mearsheimer (2001) argues that the most desirable strategy that the hegemon can implement against a rising power is buck-passing. In this context, the hegemon does not undertake the responsibility of balancing the aggressor. It transfers this responsibility to other states who are neighbours of the aggressor. Thus, it can avoid the expensive cost of wars (Mearsheimer, 2001, Chapter 5). However, the Asia-Pacific states do not have enough power to balance China without help from the United States (Mearsheimer, 2011, p. 33). Thus, the most logical option left is balancing for the US.

Balancing strategy involves a direct confrontation between the aggressor and the balancer. In this strategy, the balancer takes direct responsibility and uses its power so that the aggressor does not disturb the balance of power (Mearsheimer, 2001, Chapter 5). Mearsheimer predicts that if China continues to rise, the US will form a balancing coalition against China with other states, like Russia, India, Japan, South

Korea, Singapore, Vietnam, and Australia, in the Asia Pacific region to contain it (Mearsheimer, 2006b; 2010; 2011). Such a situation may cause a slowdown in rising of China, thus ending its potential to be a hegemon. However, if balancing fails, the US may lose its dominant position in the region; and China may become a regional hegemon.

However, there is no consensus in the literature about the possibility of China's achieving hegemony. In the offensive structural realist literature, some scholars think that it is very difficult for China to become a hegemon. According to Elman, “regional hegemony is only achievable when is easy” (Elman, 2004, p. 563). According to this faction of offensive structural realism, the US became a regional hegemon because there was no state to balance it in its region and the European states, which were the superpowers of that time, were preoccupied with the problems among themselves (Elman, 2004; Layne 2006). Elman points out that since the US is the hegemon in the current system, there will always be a balancer in the system against the emergence of a possible hegemon (Elman, 2004). From this point of view, when China becomes a real threat to the US hegemony, it will be balanced by the US.

According to offensive structural realism, China's economic development threatens the Asia-Pacific states; because if China reaches enough power that cannot be balanced, it will acquire the ability to follow unilateral policies, dominate other countries, or even annex them. Although China argues that it will use its power for peaceful purposes, according to the realist view, states often give each other false information and hide their true motivations.

In light of arguments of offensive structural realists, China became the most powerful state in the far east, so it has started to follow offensive policies to protect its interests and change the current balance of power in the region in favour of itself. More powerful China will feel more motivated to pursue aggressive policies.

Is China following aggressive policies in its foreign relations? What is the impact of China's economic rise on its current behaviours? Is the argument, which offensive structural realists see as a universal rule, that the rising great power will seek hegemony valid for China? In the next chapters of the thesis, the Taiwan question and the Belt and Road Initiatives will be examined in respect of offensive structural realist arguments. At this point, the Taiwan issue is chosen for analysis because it is accepted as a reflection of China's desire to establish Greater China and the clearest evidence of the desire for hegemony. The Belt and Road Initiatives, on the other hand, will be examined because it is accepted as a project which targets the economic growth of not only China but also its partner countries. Considering China makes huge investments in partner countries in respect of BRI projects, it may argue that China aims to develop together with the developing states.

CHAPTER 4

TAIWAN QUESTION AND OFFENSIVE STRUCTURAL REALISM

4.1. Taiwan

With the outbreak of the Ukraine-Russia War, a possible war between China and Taiwan has become more controversial in International Relations. In previous chapters of the thesis, China's current situation, power and place in international relations are examined. In this chapter, the effect of the strengthening of China on the Taiwan question will be analysed.

Taiwan's legal status is a controversial topic in international relations. As recent studies by Lin, Wu & Yeh (2022), Taiwan is a country that functions as a sovereign state. It has approximately 24 million populations, territories, a sovereign government and diplomatic relations with 14 states. In this respect, it has the components of the state specified at the 1933 Montevideo Conference. However, it is not recognized by major powers. China's continued desire to unite with Taiwan is the main obstacle to its recognition (Lin, Wu & Yeh, 2022, pp. 37-38). In this respect, Taiwan's de facto independence situation continues.

Taiwan is a country with 36,197 square kilometres of land area (Governmental Portal of the Republic of China, n.d.). It consists of Taiwan, Kinmen, Matsu, and other islands in the South China Sea (Lin, Wu & Yeh, 2022, pp. 37). Its current president is Tsai Ing-wen, its capital is Taipei, and it has a multi-party democratic system (Governmental Portal of the Republic of China, n.d.). Taiwan is about 160 km from the Southeast Coast of mainland China (Copper, August 14, 2022).



Figure 4. 1: Map of Taiwan
(Nations Online Project, n.d.)

Retrieved: <https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/taiwan-map.htm>

Taiwan is also an economically developed country. Taiwan, which was the world's 15th largest exporter of goods in 2020, had a \$669 billion nominal GDP in that year

(Governmental Portal of the Republic of China, n.d.). Taiwan is also a high technology producing country which produces technologies such as 5G telecommunications, semiconductors, Artificial Intelligence, and the Internet of Things (American Institute in Taiwan, 2022).

Considering arguments of offensive structural realism, it can be said that ascending China is a rigid obstacle to the independence desires of Taiwan and its national security. This chapter of the thesis is aimed to examine the Taiwan question in the scope of the arguments of offensive structural realists by comparing them with the official discourses of China. In this respect, it is crucial to explain the historical background of the Taiwan question before analysing it.

4.2. Historical Background of the Taiwan Question

The root of the Taiwan question has a long historical background. As described in the study of Charney & Prescott (2000), even though Imperial China controlled the Pescadores Islands, which is very close to Formosa Island (the main island of Taiwan), it did not control Formosa Island, which is 25 nautical miles far from the mainland of China. In the 17th century, Japan and Spain tried to control the island; but they did not achieve it. In this period, Dutch, who competed with the Spanish, took control of the island. After the Qing dynasty dethroned Ming Dynasty and held control of China in the mid-17th century, leaders and supporters of the Ming Dynasty started to settle on Formosa Island; and they took control of the island in 1661. After their leader Cheng Ching died in 1683, domestic disturbances began to emerge. This situation gave an opportunity for the Qing Dynasty to take control of Formosa Island and end the Ming Dynasty. Then the island was captured by the Chinese empire in 1683, and their sovereignty on the island lasted for 213 years (Charney & Prescott, 2000, pp. 453-455).

However, the Empire of China lost in the first Sino-Japanese War to the Empire of Japan in 1895; thus, the control of the island was passed over to the Japanese with

the Treaty of Shimonoseki signed at the end of the war (Van Vranken Hickey, 1993, pp. 563-564; Charney & Prescott, 2000, p.457). Japan's control of the island lasted until the end of World War II; Japan lost the war and withdrew from Taiwan, and the island came under Kuomintang's control (Burgoyne, 2020, p. 318).

As described briefly in Chapter 3, before Japan attacked China in 1937, the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) were fighting to seize power in China. These two groups joined forces to resist the attacks of the Empire of Japan and defended China. In the Cairo Declaration accepted between the US, the Republic of China, and the UK in 1943, it was declared that Taiwan, which was occupied by Japan, would be returned to China at the end of the war (Van Vranken Hickey, 1993, p. 564; Charney & Prescott, 2000, p. 457). Chiang Kai-shek attended the declaration as leader of China. After the Second World War ended, the authority to rule the island was given to the administration of Chiang Kai-shek (Van Vranken Hickey, 1993, p. 564). Then, Kuomintang seized control of the island. In addition, the US recognized Taiwan as a province of China (Van Vranken Hickey, 1993, p. 564).

China won the victory against the Japanese in the Second World War. However, the civil war that started before the invasion of the Empire of Japan continued. After the Chinese Communist Party took control of mainland China in 1949, Chiang Kai-shek and Kuomintang withdrew from mainland China to Taiwan, Pescadores Islands, and several small islands, which they already controlled (McCready, 2003, pp. 2-3). The Communist Party led by Mao began to control mainland China. After that, the People's Republic of China aimed to end the civil war completely by taking Taiwan (McCready, 2003, p.3).

Although the US accepted Taiwan as a province of China until the first months of 1950, this policy changed with the outbreak of the Korean War (Van Vranken Hickey, 1993, pp. 565-568). For this reason, the Truman administration sent the 7th fleet to the region to preserve the current situation in Taiwan in June 1950 (Van Vranken

Hickey, 1993, pp. 568; McCready, 2003, p. 3). This strategy protected Taiwan from a possible invasion, which would have been conducted by the People's Republic of China (McCready, 2003, p. 3). Of course, Taiwan's armed forces and the stopping power of the water located between mainland China and the main island of Taiwan also played a role in preventing possible attacks (Rigger, 2019, p. 11).

In 1953 the US lifted the blockade, and hereupon China began bombing the islands of Kinmen and Matsu (Tiezzi, July 29, 2015). While this event, called the First Taiwan Strait Crisis, was continuing, the United States and Taiwan signed the Mutual Defense Treaty that they assured defend each other in case of an attack in 1954 (Tiezzi, July 29, 2015). However, this agreement did not prevent the deepening of the crisis (Sheng, 2008, pp. 477-478). As a result of these operations, the Dachen Islands and Yijiangshan Island, which belonged to Taiwan, passed under the People's Republic of China's control (Cole, 2006, p. 20). In 1955, the US Senate also adopted the Formosa Resolution that authorized the President to take necessary measures to protect Taiwan from attack (Cole, 2006, p. 21).

As stated by Sheng (2008), the US aimed to clearly demonstrate the validity of its commitments to Taiwan by sending air and naval forces to the region and spreading the idea that using atomic bombs was one of the options for the US so as to protect Taiwan. US military supremacy and its insistence on protecting Taiwan directed Mao to agree to negotiate (Sheng, 2008, p. 478). In 1955, as a result of the calls of Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai at the Bandung Conference, followed by the Geneva talks between the United States and the People's Republic of China, the First Taiwan Strait Crisis ended (Cole, 2006, pp. 20-21).

In 1958, The Second Taiwan Strait Crisis started with the artillery fires of the People's Republic of China (Sheng, 2008, p. 488). Against China's attempt to blockade the islands of Taiwan, the US sent nuclear-capable operational forces, which included five aircraft carriers, to the region; it also deployed nuclear-capable B-47 bombers on Guam (Cole, 2006, pp. 23-24). China continued its bombardments intermittently and

stopped in December 1958 (Jian, 2001, pp. 201-202). The US, which placed its nuclear forces in the region against a possible invasion of Taiwan, threatened China directly to use nuclear weapons. In this respect, the US has assumed direct responsibility to protect Taiwan in both strait crises.

Until 1971, the Republic of China (Taiwan) represented the Chinese people at the United Nations. As examined by Burgoyne (2020), by the 1970s, the PRC began to pressure the United Nations in order to be recognized as the representative of China. In 1971, UNGA passed Resolution 2758, which decided to expel the Republic of China (Taiwan) from the UN, and the PRC gained a seat in the United Nations General Assembly. It also became one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. This situation has made Taiwan more isolated in the international arena and undermined its recognition as a state (Burgoyne, 2020, p. 320).

In 1972, the relations between the US and China began to warm up, and China, which had been disturbing Taiwan with artillery fires regularly until this period, began to maintain the status quo in its relations with Taiwan (McCready, 2003, p.3).

In 1978, President Carter announced that the United States would terminate the Mutual Defense Treaty at the beginning of 1980 and noted that the People's Republic of China (Taiwan) would gain full recognition while the Republic of China would lose its recognized status (Cima, 1979, pp.133-134). Since 1979, the US has only recognized the PRC as the representative of China (Cohen, 1987, p. 623). Both the de-recognition of Taiwan and the abolition of the Mutual Defense Treaty that serves security guarantee for Taiwan, which proved its usefulness in strait crises, have put Taiwan's status in international relations in a difficult position and endangered its security.

Instead of the abolished the Mutual Defense Treaty, the United States Congress adopted the Taiwan Relations Act in 1979 (Ong, 2007, p.47; Rigger, 2019, p. 12).

According to the study by Rigger (2019), this agreement created a legal framework for managing relations with Taiwan, which the US does not recognize. The purpose of the law is to support commercial and cultural interaction between Taiwan and the United States while maintaining peace and stability in the region. With the law, the US also commits to arms sales to Taiwan (Rigger, 2019, pp. 12-13).

Although the Taiwan Relations Act has included some commitments to ensure Taiwan's security, the recognition of the People's Republic of China as the representative of China weakened Taiwan's position in international relations. Chiang Kai-shek aimed to stay on Formosa only until he had enough military power to take control of mainland China, but he could not achieve this goal (Burgoyne, 2020, p. 318). However, Taiwan argued that its right over the whole mainland of China continues, and the authority of Taiwan defined itself as the sovereign-in-exile of China (Cohen, 1987, p. 622).

The extraordinary situation of Taiwan has brought the need to take extraordinary measures in the country. From 1949 to 1987, Taiwan was ruled by martial law that restricted political rights and freedom of expression; this period is known as the White Terror (Lin, Wu & Yeh, 2022, p. 39). However, Taiwan started to transform into a democracy in 1987 (McCready, 2003, p.3). McCready (2003) emphasizes that this transition was perceived by the People's Republic of China as a step for Taiwan to achieve its desire for independence. China inferred from this transformation that the Taiwan administration had abandoned the one-China policy. This step caused a military face-off between the US and China between 1995 and 1996 (McCready, 2003, p.3).

After Taiwan's President Lee Teng-hui visited the United States in 1995 and the first Taiwanese presidential election was held in 1996, China attempted to deter Taiwan from the idea of independence by launching missile attacks on the East China Sea (Ong, 2007, p.47). The PLA held naval, air and amphibious military exercises in the region in March 1996 (Cole, 2006, p. 29). The People's Republic of China showed

that it was ready for an attack on Taiwan with these military exercises. The US responded to this threat by sending warships, including two aircraft carriers, to the region, and the crisis ended with China announcing that it was not preparing an attack on Taiwan. (Cole, 2006, pp. 29- 30). This conflict is called the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis. This kind of tension also continued to emerge between 1999 and 2000 (McCready, 2003, p. 3).

Since 1949, relations between China and Taiwan have been very fragile and have tended to cause crises in the Asia-Pacific region. Representatives of Taiwan and China, who met in Hong Kong through their semi-official institutions, agreed that mainland China and Taiwan belonged to one China in 1992 (Chen, 2016, pp. 745-746). This event, called the 1992 Consensus, was an initiative of the parties in which they aimed to compromise with each other. However, both sides claimed that the one-China principle refers to their own sovereignty in mainland China and Taiwan (Chen, 2016, pp. 745-746).

As argued in the study of Lin, Wu and Yeh (2022), President Lee Teng-hui's two-state solution proposals for the solution of the problem in 1999 resulted in the suspension of the PRC-ROC relations. After the Democratic Progressive Party candidate Chen Shui-bian won the Taiwan presidential election in 2000, Taiwan rejected the 1992 Consensus. However, this claim of Taiwan did not receive support of the United States. Then, China enacted the Anti-Secession Law in 2005 in order to deter Taiwan from declaring independence. This law allows China to use force against Taiwan in the face of a possible declaration of independence (Anti-Secession Law, 2005). Although the 1992 Consensus was reaffirmed with the coming to power of Kuomintang candidate Ma Ying-jeou in 2008, Democratic Progressive Party candidate Tsai Ing-wen again rejected the 1992 consensus when she came to power in 2016. Whenever the Taiwan administration takes a step toward international recognition, China responds to Taiwan by applying economic, political and military pressure (Lin, Wu & Yeh, 2022, p.43). The relationship between China and Taiwan continues in the same way today.

In conclusion, both the Republic of China (Taiwan) and the People's Republic of China claim full sovereignty over mainland China and Taiwan. China's attitude towards Taiwan has been aggressive since 1949. Moreover, China occupied the Dachen Islands and Yijiangshan Island, which belong to Taiwan. The People's Republic of China also hinders Taiwan's international recognition and declaration of independence. China has stated many times that it will not hesitate to use force for these purposes and even enacted this discourse with the 2005 Anti-Secession Law. For all these reasons, China is the biggest threat to Taiwan's security, and it continues to increase its economic and military capacity enormously day by day.

4.3. Current Situation of the Republic of China (Taiwan)

According to the news published by Reuters on August 30, 2022, a drone of the People's Liberation Army was fired warning shots by the Taiwan army. After Nancy Pelosi, the U.S. House of Representatives Speaker visited Taiwan, the People's Liberation Army started to conduct military drills in the region. During these military exercises, China's drones flew very close to the Kinmen Islands, which are controlled by Taiwan, many times (Blanchard & Tung, August 30, 2022).

In response to the many violations and manoeuvres of the People's Liberation Army Air Force and the People's Liberation Army Navy around Taiwan, the US sent two warships to the Taiwan Strait (Lendon, 2022, August 28, 2022). Although the US insistently emphasizes that the passage of its warships through the strait is in accordance with international law, this passage was a countermovement against China's aggressive actions in the region.

It is not the first time such incidents have occurred between the People's Republic of China and the United States. Considering the history of cross-strait relations, it is clear that Taiwan has always been a sensitive issue in US-China relations. Taiwan, which cannot compete with China with respect to power, is unilaterally dependent on the United States in terms of defence. For a long time, the US has prepared a suitable

environment for Taiwan's survival by maintaining the status quo in the region. With the rise of China, maintaining the current situation in Asia-Pacific is becoming a more challenging duty for the US. This situation primarily affects Taiwan. It seems impossible for Taiwan, whose security is highly threatened by rising China, to catch China in terms of power due to its small population and insufficient geographical size. At this point, Taiwan is following some strategies to minimize the Chinese threat and ensure its survival.

According to Taiwan's claim, although the United States is the dominant power in terms of security in the region, the dominance of the US and the security of Taiwan is being threatened by China's military modernization, the uncertain situation in the Korean peninsula and the controversial condition of islands and maritime rights (Ministry of National Defense, ROC, 2019a, p. 8). However, Taiwan generally sees China as the main threat to its security in its security papers. In this respect, Taiwan emphasized that the security in the region depends on the competition between the US and China (Ministry of National Defense, ROC, 2021, p.8). According to the official claim of Taiwan, the United States is a power that seeks to consolidate its relations with its allies in the region and serves regional peace, whereas China is a revisionist power that is trying to get stronger and dominate its region (Ministry of National Defense, ROC, 2019a, p.14).

Even though the People's Republic of China insistently emphasizes that it wants to unite with Taiwan peacefully, it still keeps the use of force as an option and frequently mentions it (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2021, p.115). As emphasized above, Taiwan's declaration of independence is *casus belli* for China. In this context, China wants Taiwan to adhere to the 1992 Consensus. However, when the Democratic Progressive Party came to power in Taiwan, Taiwan acted against the consensus.

As explained by IISS (2021), when Tsai Ing-wen, the chairperson of the Democratic Progressive Party, was re-elected as president of the Republic of China in 2020, China started to conduct military drills, which were perceived as simulators of possible

scenarios for Taiwan invasion. These military drills became more frequent in September. On 18-19 September, China sent some of its warplanes and warships to Taiwan's Air Defence Identification Zone within the scope of two military exercises (IISS, 2021, p. 229). China continued its reaction to the presidential election of Taiwan after September. The People's Liberation Army performed 554 sorties from 16 September 2020 to 20 June 2021 into the Southwest part of Taiwan's Air Defence Identification Zone (Ministry of National Defense, ROC, 2021, p.42). Taiwan perceives these sorties as invasion threats.

All these military threats indicate that rising China is pursuing a more aggressive Taiwan policy. Moreover, China does not use just military means to pressure Taiwan. As mentioned before, China is actively trying to prevent Taiwan from being recognized by other states and being a member of international organizations. In this context, China, which prevents Taiwan from joining institutions such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Criminal Policy Organization (INTERPOL), is trying to maintain its relations with the Kuomintang, which is not in power (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2021, p.99).

Economic means are other tools in the hands of China that can be used against Taiwan. Especially after the 1980s, Taiwan's economic dependence on China has begun to increase unilaterally, and China has become the largest exporter and importer of Taiwan (Wu, 2018, p. 711). This situation makes the economy of Taiwan more fragile. However, according to the official claims of Taiwan, the most obvious form of the China threat is hidden in its military development.

According to The Ministry of National Defense of the Republic of China (2019), the rapid development of the People's Republic of China accelerates its military development and modernization. In addition, China is enhancing its control over the sea by patrolling routinely in the South China Sea, where it built runways and missile batteries on the reefs and islets. The growing power of the PLA is becoming an

increasingly serious threat to the stability and development of the region, and it also jeopardizes Taiwan's security (Ministry of National Defense, ROC, 2019).

The PLA's ongoing modernization process is deepening the power gap between the PLA and the Republic of China Army gradually (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2021, p.122). Taiwan's discomfort with the military development of China is also clearly seen in its defence reports published in 2019 and 2021. Throughout the history of cross-strait relations, China has displayed aggressive attitudes towards Taiwan. The situation is becoming more dangerous for Taiwan because the strengthening of the PLA means that the balance of power between China-Taiwan is changing in favour of China.

If the Taiwan dilemma is analyzed in terms of offensive structural realism, it can be said that China does not invade Taiwan in the current situation because it is not strong enough to confront the US and its regional allies. However, China is far stronger today than in the past. For this reason, China is putting more pressure on Taiwan today compared to the past. It is nearly impossible for Taiwan to catch up with China in terms of military development. However, like any state, the main purpose of Taiwan is to survive.

It is clear that Taiwan sees China as the primary threat to its own survival (Ministry of National Defense, ROC, 2019a) Continuing US supremacy in the Asia-Pacific region is a prerequisite to reducing this threat. At this point, it can be said that the key actors in the Taiwan question are China and the US. Of course, this does not mean that Taiwan awaits its fate under the security umbrella of the United States. A stronger Taiwan can maintain the status quo by taking a stand against China with other regional powers. If the deterrence of Taiwan's military increases, its hand will strengthen against China. In this context, Taiwan is trying to increase its defence expenditures and develop strategies that it can implement against the possible attack of China by acting in accordance with the realist view.

According to data from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) (2021), in 2020, the GDP in Taiwan was worth 636 billion US dollars, and its defence budget was 13.9 billion dollars. It has 163,000 active military personnel. On the other hand, China's GDP was 15.2 trillion US dollars in the same period. China's defence budget was 193 billion US dollars, and it had 2,035,000 active military personnel (IISS, 2021, pp. 249, 301). In short, there is a serious asymmetry between China and Taiwan, both in economic and military means.

However, Taiwan wants to increase its defence budget under Tsai Ing-wen's government (IISS, 2021, p.227). Between the 2017-2021 fiscal years, Taiwan allocated 16-17 per cent of its central government budget to defence expenditures (Ministry of National Defense, ROC, 2021, p.131). Between 2019-2021, Taiwan's defence budget increased by more than 3 per cent annually (Ministry of National Defense, ROC, 2021, p.132). The ratio of Taiwan's defence spending to its GDP exceeded 2 per cent in 2020; this rate is the highest since the 1990s (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2021, pp. 122-123).

As emphasized by The Ministry of National Defense of the Republic of China (2021), Taiwan is increasing its combat readiness and military capacity against the growing China threat. In this regard, Taiwan's main aim is to build a national defence structure which is strong enough to deter China from conducting a possible attack (Ministry of National Defense, ROC, 2021, p.8). Taiwan is taking some initiatives to achieve this goal.

IISS (2021) argues that Taiwan focuses on developing its deterrence and air defence capacities at the seaside of the island. Taiwan's recent purchase of 66 F-16C/D Block 70 fighters from the US by allocating \$8.3 billion is a sign that it wants to strengthen its air force. Additionally, Taiwan also declares that it wants to buy F-35 aircraft from the US (IISS, 2021, p.301). Taiwan is also taking important steps to strengthen its joint operations capacity (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2021, p.122).

It is obvious that Taiwan's security still depends on the support of the United States (Ding & Haung, 2011, p.49). As stated in ROC National Defense Report 2021, Taiwan sees the US as its most important partner, which not only sells military equipment to it but also cooperates with it in order to strengthen Taiwan's defence (Ministry of National Defense, ROC, 2021, p.33). As explained in detail at the beginning of this chapter, the United States has been the most important supporter of Taiwan's security since the 1950s. The commitments of the United States to Taiwan's security have increasingly continued under the Trump administration. Biden also emphasized that after he becomes President, the United States will continue to support Taiwan's efforts to improve its defence and increase its international recognition (Ministry of National Defense, ROC, 2021, p.33).

Since 2010, the US has sold more than 23 billion USD in weapons to Taiwan (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2021, p.123). Towards the end of 2021, the US also decided to sell M1A2T tanks, Man-portable Air Defense Stinger missiles, Field Information and Communications Systems (FICS), howitzers, various long-range precision-strike missiles, multiple rocket launchers and MQ-9B Unmanned Aerial Vehicles to Taiwan; when this sale takes place, Taiwan's military strength will increase significantly (Ministry of National Defense, ROC, 2021, p.147).

In addition to these arms purchases, Taiwan is trying to modernize its weapons and, more importantly, develop its domestic defence industry (IISS, 2021, p.301). In this respect, seven new programs, which is also including the domestic submarine, rapid mining ship and new generation guided missile frigate projects, were initiated in order to strengthen the ROC navy (Ministry of National Defense, ROC, 2019, p.107). Taiwan also finances domestic research centres to conduct studies on combat aircraft, armoured vehicles, missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles and other military technologies (Ministry of National Defense, ROC, 2021, p.96). However, the defence projects and investments of Taiwan that aim to strengthen its defence will not be enough to compete with China (Wu, 2018).

Taiwan has begun to lose the arms race against China at the beginning of the 2000s (Wu, 2018, p.707). In this respect, Taiwan is trying to develop asymmetric warfare capacities to deter the People's Republic of China from a possible invasion (Ministry of National Defense, ROC, 2019, p.52; Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2021, p.122). The concept of asymmetric warfare involves attacking the enemy's vulnerabilities and disrupting its operational centre of gravity; the aim is to damage the combat power of the enemy by disrupting their attack plans (Ministry of National Defense, ROC, 2021, p.67). Electronic warfare, cyber operations, coastal defence missiles, unmanned aerial systems, fast naval mining capacity etc. are involved in this concept (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2021, p.123). According to the Ministry of National Defense of ROC, the PLA's soft spot is the stage of crossing the Taiwan Strait. In this respect, Taiwan is aware that it should use the Strait as a natural barrier and prevent the PLA from landing on Taiwan's coasts (Ministry of National Defense, ROC, 2021, p.67).

Taiwan's armament desire stems from the anxiety created by the rise of China. According to Taiwan's official discourse, China aims to complete its military modernization within the scope of its 2035 targets and reach adequate military capacity to prevent the intervention of foreign forces in the region when it conducts operations against Taiwan (Ministry of National Defense, ROC, 2021, p. 36). In previous strait crises, the US has prevented a possible invasion with the military forces it has sent to the region. At this point, Taiwan's main fear is that China will use its extensive military capabilities to prevent the US from intervening in the region during a possible crisis in the future.

Taiwan's efforts to increase its military power prove the arguments of offensive structural realists in many respects. First of all, Taiwan's survival is threatened by China. At this point, Taiwan is trying to increase its military power to protect itself from a possible attack. However, China is much stronger than Taiwan in terms of military power and latent power. For this reason, Taiwan is trying to strengthen its

relations with the United States against China. At this point, Taiwan acts quite rationally and increases its probability of survival.

On the other hand, the US's security supports and arms sales to Taiwan are also aimed at maintaining the status quo between China and Taiwan. If Taiwan is occupied, the US will lose one of its important allies in the South China Sea, which is the key point for world energy and product transportation. In addition, if China controls the island; the labour force, means of production, and the added values produced on the island will also support China's economic growth. In this respect, becoming stronger the People's Republic of China in the Asia-Pacific region and the South China Sea is against the interests of the United States.

4.4. China's Claims on Taiwan

The visit of Nancy Pelosi, which was mentioned in the previous section, contains important clues regarding the history and course of the Taiwan problem. According to China's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying's (August 4, 2022) press release about the visit, The People's Republic of China perceived the visit as an act against its territorial integrity and sovereignty; and an effort to interfere in its internal affairs. Hua insistently emphasized in her speech that the visit was for the purpose of provocation. According to the official claim of China, with this visit, the United States violated China-US Joint Communiqués and UN Resolution 2758, which is legal proof that Taiwan is Chinese territory and the only representative of the Chinese people is the People's Republic of China. In her speech, Hua Chunying highlighted that Taiwan has never been a country, neither legally nor historically; it is a part of China. In this respect, China argued that this visit is a threat to its sovereignty and integrity because it inflames Taiwan's aspirations for independence. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, August 4, 2022).

After this visit, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China announced that it suspended many talks and agreements with the United States,

including cooperation against transnational crime, narcotic cooperation, repatriation of illegal immigrants and climate change talks (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, August 5, 2022). In addition, China conducts military drills around Taiwan, and it claims that this strategic move is crucial to respond to the US and Taiwan separatists (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, August 4, 2022).

China's statements are consistent with its Taiwan policy, which it has followed for decades. The People's Republic of China published three variant white papers on its relations with Taiwan in 1993, 2000 and 2022. The common emphasis of these security papers is that there is only one China in the world, the Taiwan question is an internal affair of China, Taiwan's independence will not be accepted, and China does not disclaim its right to use force against Taiwanese separatists (The Taiwan Affairs Office & The Information Office of the State Council, 1993; 2000; SCIO, 2022). All these arguments were enacted with the Anti-Secession Law, which was adopted at the third session of the tenth National People's Congress on 14 March 2005.

According to Article 2 of the Anti-Secession Law (2005), Taiwan and mainland China belong to one China, and there is no other China in the world. Because Taiwan is a part of China, China shall never allow the separation of Taiwan from this one-China. According to Article 3, the Taiwan question is rooted in the Chinese Civil War, so it is an internal affair of China. According to Article 8, if Taiwan separatists cause Taiwan to secede from China, major events occur that cause Taiwan to secede from China, or the ways of peaceful reunification are totally exhausted, the People's Republic of China will take non-peaceful measures in order to protect its territorial integrity (Anti-Secession Law, 2005). With the Anti-Secession Law, China declares in which cases it uses force against Taiwan. In this respect, China insistently emphasizes that if Taiwan declares independence, it will not hesitate to use force.

China bases its claims on Taiwan on some historical, logical and legal foundations. According to the official claims of China, Taiwan has belonged to China since ancient

times; and there are strong historical and cultural ties between mainland China and Taiwan (SCIO, 2022, “I. Taiwan Is Part of China - This Is an Indisputable Fact”, para.1). People on both sides of the strait are members of the Chinese nation (The Taiwan Affairs Office & The Information Office of the State Council, 2000; SCIO, 2022). In this context, China claims that “Taiwan has never been a state” (SCIO, 2022, “I. Taiwan Is Part of China - This Is an Indisputable Fact”, para, 22). China emphasizes that Taiwan belongs to all Chinese, including the Chinese in the mainland and Taiwan (SCIO, 2022, “3. Any Attempt by Separatist Forces to Prevent Reunification Is Bound to Fail”, para. 3).

The PRC supports its historical and logical arguments about its one-China claim with international law. At the 26th United Nations General Assembly session held in October 1971, it was decided that the People's Republic of China would be the only state to represent China in the United Nations with Resolution 2758; thus, the Taiwan administration was expelled from the United Nations and all UN affiliates. (SCIO, 2022, “I. Taiwan Is Part of China - This Is an Indisputable Fact”, para, 10; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, August 4, 2022). In this context, it has been confirmed that there is no second China in the world since China has only one seat in the United Nations (SCIO, 2022, “I. Taiwan Is Part of China - This Is an Indisputable Fact, para, 10”). 181 countries, including the US, have established diplomatic relations with China in the light of the one-China principle (SCIO, 2022, “I. Taiwan Is Part of China - This Is an Indisputable Fact”, para, 22; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, August 4, 2022). In this context, China claims those states who support Taiwan's recognition, which is led by the US, violate Resolution 2758 and international law (SCIO, 2022, “I. Taiwan Is Part of China - This Is an Indisputable Fact”, para, 13).

China sees the US as the main threat to its peaceful reunification policy. According to the official claim of China, the United States accepted the one-China principle and recognized the government of China as the only legitimate government of China in The China-US Joint Communique on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations,

which was published in December 1978 (The Taiwan Affairs Office & The Information Office of the State Council, 2000; SCIO, 2022, “I. Taiwan Is Part of China - This Is an Indisputable Fact”, para, 14; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, August 4, 2022). In the Joint Communiqué of 1982, the United States also accepted that China is the only legitimate government, and Taiwan is a part of China (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, August 4, 2022). China also claims that during President Nixon's visit in 1972, the United States announced that it would not support Taiwan's independence and confirmed that in the Shanghai Communiqué (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, August 4, 2022). However, according to China's claims, the US has repeatedly sold weapons to Taiwan in violation of its commitments in the Joint Communiqué of 1982 (The Taiwan Affairs Office & The Information Office of the State Council, 2000, p.290).

China has a roadmap for peaceful reunification with Taiwan. According to SCIO (2022), China wants to apply the concept of One Country Two Systems to Taiwan, which it followed to unite with Hong Kong and Macao. Under this concept, the existing social system in Taiwan will be preserved, and it will have an autonomous structure (SCIO, 2022). Within the scope of peaceful reunification, China will not send military or administrative personnel to Taiwan and will not interfere with the capitalist system on the island (The Taiwan Affairs Office & The Information Office of the State Council, 2000, pp.280-281). China repeatedly emphasizes its desire for peaceful reunification and guarantees that Taiwan's autonomy will be protected by law (SCIO, 2022). In addition, China opposes giving the people of Taiwan the right to self-determination and holding a referendum in this context (The Taiwan Affairs Office & The Information Office of the State Council, 1993; The Taiwan Affairs Office & The Information Office of the State Council, 2000, p. 287).

China also claims that reunification will have benefits for Taiwan in means of economy and defence. SCIO (2022) underlined that China-Taiwan trade volume, which was 46 million US dollars in 1978, increased to 328 billion US dollars in 2021.

Today, China is Taiwan's largest export market, and Taiwan is the biggest investment centre for China. By the end of 2021, mainland China has invested 71 billion US dollars in Taiwan (SCIO, 2022, "II. Resolute Efforts of the CPC to Realize China's Complete Reunification", para. 17). In this context, China also remarks on its importance to Taiwan's economy and the fact that the peaceful reunification will further support the growth of Taiwan's economy (SCIO, 2022, "1. Taiwan Will Have a Vast Space for Development", para.1). Apart from these aspects, China also claims that reunification will prevent a possible invasion of Taiwan, and it emphasizes that reunification plays a key role in the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation (SCIO, 2022, "1. Complete Reunification Is Critical to National Rejuvenation", para.2).

Up to this point, there is a parallelism between the white papers and the official statements of China on the Taiwan issue. To summarize, in these white papers, it is mentioned that Taiwan's independence cannot be accepted, the use of force will be applied as a last resort, the main aim is peaceful reunification, the Taiwan problem is an internal problem, and Taiwan has never been a state in the history. However, in *The Taiwan Question and China's Reunification in the New Era*, which was published in 2022, a new discourse appears in addition to all of these. In this paper, SCIO (2022) argues that "the Chinese nation has achieved a historic transformation from standing upright to becoming prosperous and growing in strength, and national rejuvenation is driven by an unstoppable force. This marks a new starting point for reunification" (SCIO, 2022, "Preamble", para.4). In this regard, the SCIO (2022) declared that:

Taiwan belongs to all the Chinese people, including the 23 million Taiwan compatriots. The Chinese people are firm in their resolve and have a deep commitment to safeguarding China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the fundamental interests of the Chinese nation, and this resolve and commitment will frustrate any attempt to divide the country. When Taiwan was invaded by a foreign power more than 100 years ago, China was a poor and weak country. More than 70 years ago, China defeated the invaders and recovered Taiwan. Today, China has grown into the world's second largest economy. With significant growth in its political, economic, cultural, technological, and military strength, there is no likelihood that China will allow Taiwan to be separated again. Attempts to reject reunification and split the country are doomed, because they will founder against the history and culture of the Chinese nation as well as the resolve and commitment of more than 1.4 billion Chinese

people (SCIO, 2022, “3. Any Attempt by Separatist Forces to Prevent Reunification Is Bound to Fail”, para.3).

At this point, China declares that it will defend its claims on Taiwan more effectively as a result of its rise. In this regard, China prefers to declare its potential instead of following the low-profile policy. Moreover, this rhetoric of China shows parallelism with Taiwan's concerns about the rising Chinese threat that it mentions in its security papers and official statements, the United States' official arguments about the Taiwan issue, and offensive structural realists' arguments on the Taiwan question. In short, rising China has declared that it will act more aggressively in its official statement.

Like arguments of offensive structural realists, the US, and the Republic of Taiwan; China emphasizes that the stronger China has more ability to reunite with Taiwan. At this point, although China emphasizes that the use of power is the last resort, it accepts using force as a resort. It can be concluded from these two discourses that China, which is getting stronger day by day, will have the opportunity to put more pressure to unite with Taiwan and may even use the option to use force successfully in the future, thanks to its military development. This inference coincides with the discourses of offensive structural realists, which argue that strengthening states can act more aggressively to solve their foreign policy problems with their neighbours.

4.5. Offensive Structural Realism and the Claims about the Taiwan Question

As explained in detail in the previous sections, the economy of China has entered a rapid development process with the transformation which started in 1978. Thanks to the transformation process, China has become one of the world's leading economies today. China's economic development is an important phenomenon for offensive structural realists because they argue that a strong economy is one of the basic prerequisites for building a formidable army (Mearsheimer, 2001).

Mearsheimer (2001) classified power as military and latent. He used the notion of latent power to describe social and economic entities which are needed to build a strong army, like wealth, population, and technology (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 55-56). According to Mearsheimer (2001), these non-military powers are important to the extent that they can be converted into military power. Even though he considers military power as the determinant of a state's power, he insistently emphasizes the importance of having a large population and a developed economy in order to have a strong military (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 60-61).

As detailed in depth in the second chapter of the thesis, offensive structural realists argue that the anarchic nature of the international system pushes states to maximize their power in order to augment their security (Labs, 1997; Mearsheimer, 2001; Noguchi, 2011), because survival is the first and most important aim of states, and power is the tool that serves this purpose (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 21). At this point, offensive structural realists argue that economically developing states increase their military expenditures. In the third chapter, the increase in military spending of China and its military modernization are examined, and it is founded that China is rapidly modernizing its army and developing new weapons and technologies to be ready for next-generation wars. In the scope of this chapter, it is found that offensive structural realists' arguments that the economic rise of the states will cause their military rise is valid for China.

According to the official discourses of China, which are also analysed in the third chapter, China considers its military strengthening necessary for its peaceful development and sustainable economic growth. In short, China claims that its military development is security-oriented, and it promises that it never aims to dominate other nations. However, China's neighbour states and the United States are worried about its rise.

Taiwan is probably the country most worried about the rise of China. China's claims, policies and discourses on Taiwan have been examined in detail in the previous

sections. According to the findings of this section, China officially considers Taiwan as part of mainland China. China, which has set reunification with Taiwan as a primary target within the scope of China's rejuvenation, argues that its desire to reunite with Taiwan will definitely come true in the future.

Throughout history, rising great powers like Nazi Germany, the United States, and the Soviet Union tried to dominate other countries (Roy, 1994, p. 160; Fravel, 2010, pp. 506-507). Offensive structural realists argue that this situation is a historical rule and rising China will act in the same way because “in the anarchic world of international politics, it is better to be Godzilla than Bambi” (Mearsheimer, 2006b, p. 162). In short, strong states feel more secure than weak states, and all states want to feel more secure.

Considering the current situation, China is a state that is getting stronger gradually. Its desire to transform its economic power into military power is strengthening the arguments of offensive structural realism that China seeks regional hegemony. Offensive structural realism argues that, like all rising great powers, China also follows aggressive policies to be a regional hegemon in the future (Mearsheimer, 2006b). China's policies toward Taiwan may be accepted as the first sign of its desire for hegemony.

China has some disagreements with its neighbour states, and the resolution of the Taiwan issue in favour of China may encourage it to try to solve its problems with other states in the region with more aggressive attitudes (Glaser, 2011, p. 88). In this context, in the remainder of this section, China's Taiwan policies will be analysed in the light of offensive structural realism, its offensive and defensive objectives will be determined, and whether these policies aim to establish hegemony will be examined. It also will analyse whether the increasing aggression of China against Taiwan is an outcome of its security-oriented defence policy or a reflection of its offensive policy. If the claims of offensive structural realists are correct, Taiwan will be probably the first important target of rising China for achieving hegemony.

China declared that its modernizing program aims to build a strong army in order to protect its security, development interests and peaceful rise policy, and it also strongly emphasized that it will never use its power to dominate other nations (SCIO, 2019a; 2019b). However, China's increasingly aggressive stance towards Taiwan worries the US, Taiwan, and other regional powers. At this point, there is a lot of evidence that China's Taiwan policy has become more aggressive with its military rise.

As mentioned in the previous sections, China conducts military exercises around Taiwan and violates Taiwan's Air Defence Identification Zone repeatedly (IISS, 2021; Ministry of National Defense, ROC, 2021). When China's military manoeuvres around Taiwan are combined with its expansionist claims, a serious threat perception emerges in Taiwan's society because the only difference between military exercises and military operations is that bullets are fired at an enemy during an operation. Due to the nature of international relations, Taiwan cannot be sure that it will not be hit by the PLAAF's fighter aircraft that soar closer to its main island or the PLAN's battleships that sail around its islands. It should not be forgotten that in international relations, states often deceive each other, and lie about their future intentions.

In addition, as discussed in the previous section, China has never renounced its reunification policy. China's increasing pressure for unification is perceived as offensive by both Taiwan and the US because China does not abandon its option to use force to unify with Taiwan. As it has been examined in detail, it has legislated its threat to the use of force against Taiwan with the Anti-Secession Law. With this law, China strongly declares that it considers Taiwan's declaration of independence a *casus belli*, and this situation does not leave any other option to Taiwan except to unify with the mainland or strengthen its defence to maintain the status quo under the protection of the US.

China is aware that it can put more pressure on Taiwan to reunify as a result of its rise. According to the State Council of the People's Republic of China (2022), China

was a weak country when Taiwan was occupied by foreign states. However, China is the second largest economy today in the world, so it will not allow Taiwan to separate from the mainland (SCIO, 2022, “3. Any Attempt by Separatist Forces to Prevent Reunification Is Bound to Fail”, para. 3). As mentioned earlier, China has repeatedly stated that its main desire is peaceful reunification, even if it does not abandon the use of force as a last resort to unite with Taiwan. However, even when pro-unification governments ruled Taiwan, China continued to develop its military forces to use against Taiwan (Noguchi, 2011, p. 74). This situation brings to mind the thought that China will abandon its peaceful reunification policy when it can challenge the US in terms of military power.

The situations in which China stated that it would use force against Taiwan have also changed over time (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2021, p.115). According to the Office of the Secretary of Defense of the United States report; if Taiwan declares independence or takes actions to declare independence, it obtains nuclear weapons, or foreign states intervene in Taiwan militarily, an internal conflict emerges in Taiwan, or the dialogue between China and Taiwan is delayed indefinitely, China will use force against the island (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2021, pp. 115-116). The Office of the Secretary of Defense made this analysis based on Article 8 of the Anti-Secession Law (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2021, p. 116). It is likely that new ones will be added to these criteria as China gains strength.

As explained in the third chapter of the thesis, the army modernization of China covers many areas like the reshaping administrative structure of the PLA, the modernization of old weapons, nuclear modernization, acquiring new warplanes and battleships, and the development of new generation technological weapons. All these developments will strengthen China's hand in a possible Sino-Taiwan war. However, two modernizations aim of the PLA attracts lots of attention. These are anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) capacity (Bitzinger, 2019, p. 206; Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2021, p.77) and nuclear retaliation capacity (Glaser, 2015, pp. 69-70).

As stated by Bitzinger (2019), anti-access capacity refers to the ability of a country to attack the enemy's naval and air bases with its missiles, air forces and special forces; and area denial capacity aims to prevent the intervention of third parties to the conflict zone by attacking their naval and air elements using submarines and anti-ship missiles (Bitzinger, 2019, p. 206). This capacity clearly aims to prevent the US from intervening in the region during a conflict between China and Taiwan (Glaser, 2015, pp. 69-70; Bitzinger, 2019, p. 206). As examined in previous sections, the reason why China could not land on Taiwan's shores during the Strait Crises was the US intervention in the region and its nuclear threat. In this respect, nuclear retaliation capability will probably increase the probability of survival of China if it is faced with a nuclear attack, which is conducted by the US, in a possible war with Taiwan (Glaser, 2015, pp. 69-70). If China becomes able to threaten the US with nuclear use as a result of its nuclear modernization, the probability of the US using a nuclear bomb in a possible conflict will be greatly reduced.

The US is concerned about China's growing A2/AD capacity. For this reason, the US started to develop a new concept named AirSea Battle to respond to PLA's A2/AD capabilities during a potential Sino-Taiwan conflict (Glaser, 2015, pp. 71-71). In the future, if the US is late to intervene in the war, the well-prepared PLA may find time to land on the Taiwan coast. As a matter of fact, the PLA is conducting realistic military exercises for possible operations that it may conduct against Taiwan, especially amphibious operations (IISS, 2021, p.218). These exercises show that China wants to be ready for a possible war against Taiwan.

In this respect, Noguchi (2011) argues that China is a cautious revisionist power and its desire to control Taiwan is only a step toward expanding its power capacity toward the Western Pacific Ocean. Noguchi notes that China's first and second island chain concepts reveal its desire to achieve that (Noguchi, 2011, p.75).

These island chains are points that increase the power projection of the states that control these chains (Erickson & Wuthnow, 2016, p. 2). According to the Office of

the Secretary of Defense of the United States (2012), the first island chains start from the southern coasts of Japan and extend to the Philippine and Malaysian coasts, including Taiwan. The second island chains are a large line which includes the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and Palau (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2012, p.40). According to China's perception, these island chains are the point that hinders the projection of the PLAN and its effectiveness in open oceans (Erickson & Wuthnow, 2016, pp. 11-12). For this reason, China has focused on increasing its capacity in this region. The dominance of China in the first island chain means that the power of Japan, North Korea, the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Taiwan in the seas decreases. If China's power over the second island chain increase, the rising projection capability of the PLA will threaten the US dominance in the Pacific Ocean.

Lee (2021) also emphasized that PLA aims that increase its capability to control the first island chain with its A2/AD capacity in order to hinder the US involvement in the region by 2020. By 2050, it desires to extend its capacity to the second island chain (Lee, 2021, p. 201). In this context, China is trying to develop weapon systems that can destroy US forces in both island chains (Lee, 2021, p. 203).

This could be a step for China toward increasing its power in the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Pacific Ocean. It should not be forgotten that most of the power of the US, which is a regional hegemon, comes from its dominance over world waters. If the US had been unable to be superior on seas, it would not have effectively used its overseas bases and intervened in other parts of the world. To sum up, China's strengthened A2/AD capacity development and concept of island chains are perceived as an effort to bring its power projection deeper into the Pacific Ocean and further places (OSD, 2021, p. 77). China's desire to extend its power projection to other geographies cannot be explained in respect of its security concerns because these efforts will not increase its mainland security. This is a clear sign of China's desire for hegemony.

China's activities to dominate the seas are not only limited to its developing AD/A2 capability or increasing its power in the first and second island chains region. China is also clearly trying to increase its naval power. Today, China has the largest navy in terms of quantity (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2021, p. 49), and it is also the largest battleship producer (Khanna, 2019, p. 5). Moreover, China officially declared that it is developing its overseas infrastructure and strengthening its overseas operation capacity in order to protect its overseas interests in its white papers (SCIO, 2010, "Building of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Second Artillery Force", para.3; SCIO, 2019a, "Protecting China's Overseas Interests", para.2). Moreover, China also strengthens its capacities for strategic deterrence, joint operations, and counterattack within the scope of its modernization (SCIO, 2015, "IV. Building and Development of China's Armed Forces", para.4; SCIO, 2019, "Reshuffled PLA and PAP Troops", para.2.).

As a result of all these developments, China's capacity to defend its mainland, organize operations against neighbouring states, protect its interests in the sea and intervene in events in other geographies will increase thanks to the development of its navy. All these capacity increases will limit the US's mobility and power projection in the Asia-Pacific region and pave the way for China to become a regional hegemon.

China's growing aggression in the South China Sea is not limited to its policies toward Taiwan and the United States. China is also increasingly seeking to expand its sovereignty over the South China Sea, which is strategically important for the Asia-Pacific region (Grossman, 2020, pp. 183-184). In this respect, China is trying to turn the Spratly islands, which cause serious debates among the states of the region, into strategic military bases which belong to it (Grossman, 2020, pp. 183-184). For this purpose, China is enlarging the area of the reefs by landfilling on the sea (Jingdong, p.2019, p.111; Grossman, 2020, pp. 183-184), and it is constructing military facilities, like radars and anti-air missile batteries, on these islands (Jingdong, 2019, p. 111). Although there are no active threats to its security, China is building new

airstrips in the South China Sea that can be used as bases for its Indian Ocean operations (Ji, 2019, p. 74). China's expansion in this region greatly improves its military projection against regional states (Grossman, 2020, p. 184).

“At least, six littoral countries—China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei—claim all, some or a few of the islands in the South China Sea” (Rabbani, 2019, p.67). According to the analyse by Rabbani (2019), China has historically laid claim to these islands and reefs. However, it is thought that there are many energy reserves in these regions. In addition to energy resources, the region is extremely important as it is one of the transition points of world trade. Although regional states want to solve this dispute by peaceful means, China continues to expand its dominance in the region unilaterally (Rabbani, 2019). Many states have rights over this region. For this reason, the disputed status of the islands should be resolved multilaterally through channels of international law. China's ignoring this situation and increasing its dominance in this region is another proof of its desire for regional hegemony.

The main reason why China wants to control this region is not its historical ties to the region. As highlighted above, the South China Sea islands are strategically and economically important areas. China is the largest oil importer and energy consumer in the world (Djankov, 2016, p.7). In this context, an estimated 85 per cent of China's imports (Grieger, 2016, p.8) and 80 per cent of its energy supplies are transported by sea through the Malacca Strait (Fallon, 2015, p.144). Energy resources coming through the Strait of Malacca must pass through the South China Sea to reach China's coasts. Dominating this region is crucial to China's energy and trade security. Moreover, the Strait of Malacca “...is controlled by the United States Navy” (Ghiasi & Zhou, 2017, p.7). In this respect, the armament of the South China Sea islands may reduce the US influence in the region. Apart from this, the energy resources in the region are important for China, the world's largest energy importer. In this respect, the transition of the islands to Chinese sovereignty will support the rise of China both economically and militarily.

The realization of reunification will also provide such economic and strategic opportunities for China. According to the realist view, China's desire to reunite with Taiwan is due to its strategic importance (Noguchi, 2011, p.73). Taiwan's geopolitical location limits the movement of the Chinese navy and prevents China from effectively controlling its coastal waters (Noguchi, 2011, p.73). Therefore, if China controls Taiwan, it can safely expand its power projection even further.

Apart from that, Taiwan functions as a lighthouse to follow the sea lanes through East Asia (Mearsheimer, 2006b, p. 162). Today, the most frequented point for world trade ships is the South China Sea because China is the world's largest producer and market. However, as emphasized by Fravel (2010), China's wealthy coastal areas are very vulnerable to a US attack from Taiwan. As a consequence of this vulnerability, the US are able to interrupt China's maritime trade. Therefore, China is targeting to create a sea buffer to overcome this situation (Fravel, 2010, p 517). In this context, it will be more capable of ensuring the flow of trade and raw materials during a possible war. It is clear that if China turns the Taiwan Strait into its internal waters, it will enable to secure the flow of trade in its coastal area.

Another contribution of Taiwan's reunification with the mainland will be economically for China. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Taiwan is the world's 15th largest exporter of goods, and it had a \$669 billion nominal GDP for 2020 (Governmental Portal of the Republic of China, n.d.). From this perspective, Beijing's control of Taiwan's economy, resources, and capital may boost its economic rise and modernization process (Ong, 2007, p. 58). Moreover, Taiwan has approximately 24 million populations (Lin, Wu & Yeh, 2022, pp. 37-38). If China seizes Taiwan, Taiwan's economy and population will cause a certain increase in China's latent power.

Glaser (2015) draws attention to another point regarding the effects of the resolution of the Taiwan issue on the Chinese economy. He emphasized that China spends lots of resources to pressure Taiwan. If the Taiwan question is resolved in favour of

China, China will become more able to allocate its resource to other missions (Glaser, 2015, pp. 74-75). Rising China is likely to use these resources to accelerate its military modernization process and increase its influence in the region.

It is crystal clear that if China seizes Taiwan, its economic power, military power and mainland security will be enormously increased. Therefore, China's aggression against Taiwan has only one meaning for regional states and the US; China wants to be a hegemon.

Apart from these, the increased military expenditures of China are considered proof of the increasingly aggressive attitude towards Taiwan. China's ongoing military modernization process is deepening the power gap between the PLA and the army of Taiwan gradually (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2021, p.122). As emphasized by Mearsheimer (2001), states that are stronger than their rivals can act more aggressively compared to them because it has the capability to do that (Mearsheimer, 2001, p.37). According to realism, as the power of the state increases, the number of policies it can implement also increases. In this respect, regardless of its intention, empowering the PLA is increasing the security concerns of Taiwan. China's claim on Taiwan is not a new phenomenon in international relations. As explained at the beginning of this chapter, China has maintained its claims on Taiwan since the 1950s. The problem has become more crucial today because of the military rise of China, and the problem will become more and more critical as the PLA gets stronger in the future. However, there are some reasons to think that China's Taiwan policy has also defensive purposes.

It is clear that Taiwan is not a country that can threaten China in terms of military power (Ong, 2007, p. 46; Atesoglu, 2013, p. 91). As discussed in the previous sections, although Taiwan is trying to modernize its army, it is clear that it will not be as strong as China due to its geographical size and low population. Taiwan's administration is also aware of this situation, so it is developing asymmetric warfare strategies against China (Ministry of National Defense, ROC, 2019, p.52; Office of

the Secretary of Defense, 2021, p.122). However, as emphasized by Ong (2007), America's dominant position in world politics also affects the Taiwan issue. The US has articulated Taiwan to its East Asian strategies, and US policies have long served Taiwan's security. In this context, although Taiwan does not pose a military threat to China, the intervention of the US in the issue threatens China (Ong, 2007, p.46).

At the beginning of this chapter, the historical role of the US in the Taiwan problem was analysed, and it was concluded that the only thing that ensured Taiwan's survival during the Cold War period and in the post-Cold War era was the US's security umbrella. The US protected Taiwan's security with its military manoeuvres during Straits Crises and strengthened Taiwan's defence by selling weapons to it. The US continues to maintain the status quo between Taiwan and China. As mentioned, the US administration, which has recently approved the sale of weapons to Taiwan in large quantities, has shown that it maintains its relations with Taiwan with the visit of Pelosi. In this context, according to the perception of China, the US will strongly support Taiwan during a possible conflict.

The US insistently continue its security commitments to Taiwan. As Ong (2007) stated, if China attacks Taiwan, the US may intervene militarily in the region. This intervention could possibly bring the rise of China to a standstill. In addition, the US can use its military superiority on seas to cut off energy flow to China (Ong, 2007, pp. 48-49). In such a case, production will decrease in China, which needs an extraordinary amount of energy for its huge production.

It should not be forgotten that China has only begun to catch up with the US economically; it still falls far behind the US in technology, military, and other areas (He & Liu, 2022, p. 450). In this respect, while the United States worry about the power that China may reach in the future, China is afraid of the United States' current power. The US has military bases in nearly 100 different countries (Dreyfuss & Karlin, 2019) and some of these bases are located around the Asia-Pacific region (Huwaidin & Antwin-Boateng, 2021, pp. 9-10). Thanks to these bases, the US is able

to use its military power in overseas geographies. In this respect, the US military has extensive power projection that can fight everywhere in the world (Mearsheimer, 2010, p. 385).

US military bases in Guam, the Philippines, North Korea, and Japan make mainland China accessible to the United States. In addition to these, the US has lots of allies in the Asia-Pacific region. In a possible war, the US may use its allies' territories as supply points, and even it could also involve its allies in the war and cause serious damage to China. To sum up, while the US has the ability to conduct an attack on China, it does not seem possible for China to attack the US mainland with its current military power.

According to the perception of China, the US is using the Taiwan problem to legitimate its interventions in the Taiwan Strait and arms sales to Taiwan (Ong, 2007, p. 49), and some Chinese analysts argue that the US commitments and increasing support for Taiwan aim to bring under control the rise of China (Deng, 2001, pp.353-354). It is obvious that if China annexes Taiwan, it will become stronger. At this point, the US needs to maintain the status quo between China and Taiwan in order to maintain its dominant position in the Asia Pacific region. Apart from that, Taiwan is very close to mainland China due to its location. If the US conduct a military operation against China, it may use Taiwan as an oversea base to increase its military projection.

When all these are evaluated, it is clear that there is a deep military power gap between the US and China. Under these circumstances, it does not seem rational for China to enter a war in the near future against the US and other regional countries which are protected under the US security umbrella. The unchallengeable power of the US not only prevents China from attacking Taiwan but also causes intensifying security concerns for China.

According to offensive structural realists, the international system offers the same conditions for all states. The desires of the countries are the same and the differences in the policies followed by the countries are due to their capacities and their position in the current balance of power (Mearsheimer, 2001). The US is the single regional hegemon in the world; and according to offensive structural realism, it is the most secure state in the system. From China's perspective, over the past 240 years of US history, the US did not at war for only 16 years (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2022).

As cited before, offensive structural realists argue that the regional hegemon endeavours to avoid the emergence of new regional hegemons in other regions because a new emerging regional hegemon, even if it has emerged in a region that is too far away, may disturb the existing balance of power in other regions (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 141-142; Mearsheimer, 2010, p. 388). For this reason, the US has taken under control its peer competitors (the countries which try to be hegemons in their regions) that have started to emerge in different regions throughout history (Mearsheimer, 2006b, p. 162). In this respect, Mearsheimer argues that the US probably will contain China as it contained the USSR during the Cold War (Mearsheimer, 2006b, p. 162).

As mentioned above, Asia-Pacific countries also feel worried about China's growing power capacity. China is the most powerful state in its region today, and Asia-Pacific states do not have enough power to balance China without help from the US (Mearsheimer, 2011, p. 33). Because of their insufficient military forces and geographic proximity to China, Asia-Pacific states' security concerns over the "Chinese threat" will be deeper than the US. In this context, regional states will likely participate a balancing coalition against China, which leading by the US (Mearsheimer, 2010, p.391; Mearsheimer, 2011, p. 33).

It is obvious that the current position of the US in the Asia Pacific threatens China's security. For this reason, rising China will try to push the US out of the Asia-Pacific

region in the future (Mearsheimer, 2014b, p. 33). China's Taiwan policy can also be analysed from this perspective. China will probably seek to disrupt the close relations between the US and Taiwan, and the best possible way to achieve that is to take the control of Taiwan (Mearsheimer, 2014b, p. 33).

The US's current military power, its dominant position in the Asia-Pacific region, and its increasing influence in Asia-Pacific put great pressure on China. In this respect, China's efforts to increase its military strength and increasingly aggressive policy toward Taiwan may seem that it has defensive purposes. However, even if China does not aim to be a regional hegemon and it only aims to increase its capacity to defend itself against possible US-Taiwan cooperation; if China's military development continues, it will have the strongest army in Asia and become the dominant power in the Asia-Pacific region (Atesoglu, 2013, p. 91). At this point, even if China does not aim to be a regional hegemon, it will be a regional hegemon. As a result, hegemon China will have the power to follow unilateral or aggressive policies, dominate other nations, and even annex their territories. No one knows whether China will use these powers for its interest in the future.

To sum up, the main reason for China's capacity increase is its military rise, which is triggered by its economic rise. China, which is increasing its military capacity, has started to follow more aggressive policies against Taiwan. China affords to build capacity to prevent the intervention of the US in the region and to make military exercises which included amphibious operations reveal this situation. In addition to all these, China's diplomatic and political pressure on Taiwan is increasing day by day. These attitudes of China are also confirmed by its arguments in its white papers.

China accepts Taiwan as a part of its mainland, not a different country. It has repeatedly emphasized that Taiwan will sooner or later be unified with the mainland. In addition, China seems willing to use force in this regard. Considering the special situation of Taiwan, it can be thought that China's desire for reunification with Taiwan was due to its nationalistic sentiments. However, as noted in the previous

section, China's control of Taiwan will contribute to its economic and military rise. On the other hand, it will strengthen the security of China's mainland and extend PLA's power projection to the far oceans. In this respect, the seizure of Taiwan by China will change the balance of power in the region in China's favour. In this case, while the power of the US in the region will decrease, the influence and power of China in the region will increase. If this situation continues and cannot be stopped by the US, China will become a regional hegemon. For this reason, rising China's attitude towards the Taiwan question has offensive nature.

In this respect, the arguments of offensive realists that rising China will act more aggressively and try to establish regional hegemony seem correct when analysed over the Taiwan issue. Deng Xiaoping, the architect of the rise of China, followed the Low-Profile policy based on hiding and understating China's potential power until it acquires enough power (Layne 2012b; 2018). Leaders who came after Deng also followed the same policy. According to Layne's (2012b) study, China has hidden its developing capabilities while integrating into the US-led system with this method. At this point, Layne argues the fact that developing China is subject to the current international economic order does not mean it wants to continue its membership in the long run. China's long-term plan is to reach enough power to confront the US and then become the hegemon in its region (Layne, 2012b, p.205). In this direction, China, which has hidden its potential for many years, shows a tendency to abandon this policy today (Layne, 2018, p. 106). Hiding their real motivation and power is a strategy that is frequently used by states in international relations. This strategy is crucial to avoid a possible early balancing. For these reasons, according to offensive structural realism, all of China's claims about its peaceful development are just a discourse to hide its main aim: To become the regional hegemon.

In this chapter of the thesis, the Taiwan Question is examined in light of the arguments of the offensive structural realists and the official documents of Taiwan and China. As a result, it has been concluded that the arguments of offensive

structural realists that the rise of China led to aggressive policies are consistent with China's policies towards the Taiwan problem.

According to the official claim of China, The Belt and Road Initiative is development-oriented cooperation that supports the physical and trade infrastructures of the participating countries, aims to develop their financial systems, and increases the interaction of people living in participating countries (SCIO, 2021, “III. Boosting International Cooperation on the Belt and Road”). In the next chapter, the Belt and Road Initiative will be examined through the official discourses of China and the arguments of offensive structural realism. The fundamental purpose of this analysis is to examine the assertions of offensive structural realists about the rise of China through the Belt and Road Initiative. In this chapter, it is aimed to find whether the initiative serves China’s purpose of hegemony. In this context, the findings to be found in the next section will be compared with the findings regarding the Taiwan question. In conclusion, offensive structural realists' claims that rising China will try to be a hegemon will be examined according to the Taiwan question and the Belt and Road Initiative cases.

CHAPTER 5

THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE AND OFFENSIVE STRUCTURAL REALISM

5.1. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

Offensive structural realists explain world politics through fear, doubt, and anxiety. According to them, every state that gains power will try to turn the current balance of power in its favour because the international system is anarchical. The rise of China is the most disruptive threat to the balance of power in today's world.

According to offensive structural realists, the most important determinant of power is military power, and their perception of threat is based on physical harm. Additionally, offensive structural realists predict and interpret the actions of states in the anarchical international system based on the characteristics of the system. They ignore the singular characteristics and internal politics of states. In this respect, there is no difference between the rise of China, Nazi Germany, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, or the Empire of Japan for them. All of these states acted as dictated to them by the system.

In previous sections, it was shown that China, which has grown economically for more than four decades, has been increasing its defence budget for a long time. China is strengthening its military power in this way, and it is becoming a fearful power centre in the Asia-Pacific region. According to offensive structural realists, many Asia-Pacific states fear (and should doubt) the rise of China, and they try to find ways to contain China (Mearsheimer, 2014b). According to Mearsheimer:

China will try to dominate Asia the way the United States dominates the Western Hemisphere. It will try to become a regional hegemon. In particular, China will seek to maximize the power gap between itself and its neighbors, especially India, Japan and Russia. China will want to make sure it is so powerful that no state in Asia has the wherewithal to threaten it. It is unlikely that China will pursue military superiority so it can go on a rampage and conquer other Asian countries, although that is always possible. Instead, it is more likely that it will want to dictate the boundaries of acceptable behavior to neighboring countries... (Mearsheimer, 2014b, p. 32).

Offensive structural realists' claims that, like every strengthening state, China is also trying to change the balance of power in favour of itself, and it will try to be a regional hegemon when it reaches enough power are based on historical evidence and the rules which are dictated by the system (Mearsheimer, 2001). In order to prove these claims, it is necessary to analyse some cases in Chinese foreign policy. If China's foreign policy does not serve its purpose of hegemony, we cannot argue that China is seeking hegemony simply because it has risen economically and modernized its military. At this point, we are obliged to find some concrete proof to understand China's genuine intentions. Otherwise, we accept the premises created by the theory as un rebuttable rules; and we move away from being scientific.

In this connection, the Taiwan Question has been analysed in the previous chapter. It is founded that arguments of offensive structural realism coincided with China's current Taiwan policy and even its official discourses on Taiwan Question. However, as mentioned in detail in the previous chapter, Taiwan Question is a case in which the hand of realists is very strong because it is a high politics issue that is military and security driven. Moreover, trying to understand a state's grand strategy from a single foreign policy case probably will cause to make wrong conclusions. If it is claimed that China wants to be a hegemon, reflections of this desire should be seen in its other policies as well. For these reasons, the Belt and Road Initiative will be examined in this part of the thesis.

According to the official claims of China, the Belt and Road Initiative is a mega project which is served the mutual interest of participant countries (Xi, 2017). It is

based on a win-win situation. The project primarily covers the Asia-Pacific states, many of which are neighbours of China. States that may pose a threat to China's quest for regional hegemony, such as Russia and Pakistan, are also involved in this initiative. For these reasons, the project seems to contradict the offensive structural realists' argument that international relations is a zero-sum game and states will do their best to prevent their rival states from gaining power.

According to offensive structural realism, if China wants to be a hegemon, it must turn the balance of power in the region in its favour and increase its power while its neighbours lose power. There is no positive-sum game in the realists' world. According to their perception of the international system, states try to weaken the power of their rivals at the expense of losing power. In brief, if China is on a quest for hegemony, the Belt and Road Initiative, which is "...a project of the century" (Xi, 2017, para.1), should also serve this strategy. For this reason, offensive realists claim that rising China seeks hegemony will also be examined within the scope of the Belt and Road Initiative, and the results of this analysis will be compared with the findings of previous chapters.

5.2. The Scope of the Belt and Road Initiative

The rise of China is a topic that has occupied the agendas of international relations, political sciences, and economics scholars. The analyses made on the rise of China include a large variety of issues and cases. The BRI is one of the most popular of these phenomena.

The Belt and Road Initiative is a relatively new project. It was announced by President Xi Jinping during his visit to Kazakhstan in 2013 (Clarke, 2017, p.71; Beeson & Crawford, 2022, p. 8). The initiative consists of the Silk Road Economic Belt and Maritime Silk Road projects, and these projects are referred to as One Belt, One Road (OBOR) or Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) together (Cai, 2017, p. 2). The Belt represents the routes connecting Asia and Europe, while the Road refers to the

sea routes that are in the Pacific and Indian Oceans (Clover & Hornby, 2015). Over time, Digital Silk Road, Polar Silk Road, and Health Silk Road projects were developed, and these projects have also been articulated to the Belt and Road Initiative (Umbach, 2022). However, since the most important pillar of the project is on infrastructure, energy and transportation, these will be examined essentially.

In fact, the BRI is based on the historical Silk Road (Campbell, 2017). The term was recorded by the German explorer Ferdinand von Richthofen, who journeyed to China between 1862 and 1872 (Fallon, 2015, p. 141). The Silk Road term is used to describe the network of trade routes used between China, the Middle East and Europe, which operated between 130 B.C. and 1450 A.D; and foods, works of arts, metals, gems, and scientific-cultural knowledge were transported through this road (History.com Editors, 2021). President Xi Jinping also referred to this historical link at the Opening Ceremony of the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. Xi emphasized that the ancestors of the Chinese are the architects of the Silk Road, which supports friendly relations among different nations, and connects the continents of Asia, Europe, and Africa. In his speech, Xi also mentioned that the BRI serves similar purposes to the Silk Road, and it bases the initiative on this historical heritage of the Silk Road (Xi, 2017).

Unlike Silk Road, the Belt and Road Initiative does not represent trade routes that caravans follow to trade in different geographies. The BRI is a huge and complex infrastructure project that has lots of different dimensions. It is one of the most significant foreign and foreign economic policy, and the largest development plan of the Xi Jinping administration (Cai, 2017, pp.1-2). The main goals of the initiative are to eliminate the lack of infrastructure in the Eurasian region and increase interregional economic cooperation (Ghiasy & Zhou, 2017, p.ix). It mainly focuses on connectivity and cooperation among states in the Eurasia region and involves the areas that the historical Silk Road covered in Asia, Africa, and Europe (Napang, Nurhasanah, & Rohman, 2019, p. 53).

In the beginning, 64 states attended the initiative (OECD, 2018, p.9); and by 2021, this number had risen to 140 (OSD, 2021, p. 126). Apart from these countries, many international organizations are also members of the initiative (Zhang, 2018, p. 331). It is rather difficult to estimate the total expenditure which is spending in respect of the Belt and Road Initiative because China does not declare a comprehensive list of projects (OSD, 2021, p. 126). However, the total cost of the BRI is estimated to reach 4 trillion US dollars (Brewster, 2016, p. 281; Djankov, 2016, p.8), which is equivalent to China's total foreign currency reserves in 2015 (Djankov, 2016, p.8). It is totally obvious that the BRI is a project which only very strong economies can undertake and overcome due to its extensive scope and high cost. For this reason, it is obvious that the project is the product of the rise of China. Additionally, the high number of members indicates that the initiative is almost universal.

As it is shown in *Figure 5.1.*, Belt and Road main overland corridors stretch from China to Gwadar (Pakistan), Singapore, Piraeus (Greece), and Rotterdam (Netherlands). Main maritime corridors also start from China and pass-through Hambantota (Sri Lanka), Djibouti, Suez (Egypt), Zeebrugge (Belgium), Lagos (Nigeria), Nairobi (Kenya), Dubai (United Arab Emirates), Singapore, and Chancay (Peru). These locations show the economic corridors with the main lines.

It looked at the overland corridors in detail, the BRI consists of six main corridors (OECD, 2018, p.10). According to OECD (2018), infrastructure investments are concentrated in these corridors, which include energy and resource-rich places. The first of these corridors is New Eurasia Land Bridge, which includes a rail from China to Europe. This rail pass through Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, and Poland. The second one is China, Mongolia, Russia Economic Corridor, which involves a railway route and a steppe road. China, Central Asia, West Asia Economic Corridor is the third corridor, which is connected to Central Asia, Iran, and Turkey. China, Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor is the fourth corridor and includes Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. The fifth corridor, which is called the China, Pakistan Economic Corridor, connects the Xinjiang region to the port of

Gwadar, which is used for military and commercial objectives. The sixth corridor is called China, Bangladesh, India, Myanmar Economic Corridor (OECD, 2018, pp.10-11). Within the scope of these projects, China mainly intends to connect highways and railways in these corridors to important ports (OECD, 2018, pp.10-11) in order to cement the connections between overland and maritime corridors (Beeson & Crawford, 2022, p.11).

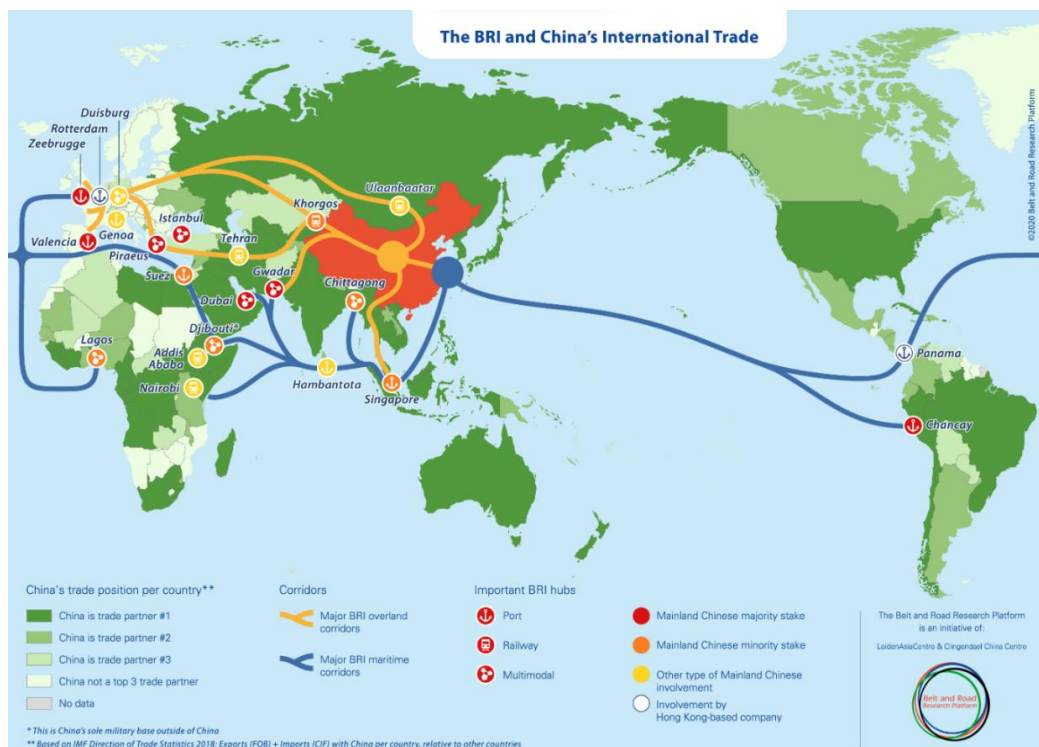


Figure 5. 1: The Belt and Road

Source: (Belt and Road Research Platform, 2020)

Retrieved: <https://leidenasiacentre.nl/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/VERSIE-FINAL-30-DEC-PNG-1-1.png>

As mentioned before, 21st Century Maritime Silk Road is the second leg of the BRI (Cai, 2017, p.2). 21st Century Maritime Silk Road mainly includes the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea (Beeson & Crawford, 2022, p.11). This road is designed to reach Europe via the Southern China Sea and the Indian Ocean, from the coast of China, and to the South Pacific via the South China Sea (National Development and Reform Commission et al., 2015, “III. Framework”, para. 2; Kulintsev, 2018, p.195); and includes Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kenya, Maldives, Morocco, New Zealand, Panama, North Korea, South Korea, and South Africa (OECD, 2018, pp.10-11). China also invests in the Piraeus port in the scope of the 21st Maritime Silk Road (Fallon, 2015, p.146). To sum up, China aims to establish ports and facilities from the Pacific Ocean to the Baltic Sea in the scope of the Maritime Silk Road (Lo, 2015, p.55).

In summary, although the project was designed on the axis of Asia and Europe, it almost completely covers the old world, as it covers many existing or under-construction ports on the African coast and the railways extending from the ports to the inner regions of Africa. Overland corridors starting from Far East Asia end in Hamburg, Madrid, Prague, and Rotterdam in Europe (Ghiasy & Zhou, 2017, p.6). Apart from this, 21st Century Maritime Silk Road also include some ports in Latin America and New Zealand. Therefore, it can be argued that the project also involved some parts of the new world.

BRI investments are trade-oriented investments and aim to create a China-based trade network (Napang, Nurhasanah, & Rohman, 2019, p.53). As argued by Kulintsev (2018), China aspires to build a single transport infrastructure from the Pacific Ocean to the Baltic Sea. This infrastructure will ensure the distribution of Chinese goods and other countries' goods in the markets of Central Asia, Europe, Russia, and the Middle East (Kulintsev, 2018, p. 196). In this respect, the BRI aims to create a very large trade line. This trade line extending from China to many different geographies

of the world will increase China's role in global development (Napang, Nurhasanah, & Rohman, 2019, p.53).

Energy transfer is another key pillar of the BRI. Within the scope of the initiative, China wants to connect the energy infrastructures of participating countries (Fallon, 2015, p.144). As emphasized by Fallon (2015), China already has pipelines passing through Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Apart from this, China is trying to create an energy corridor passing through the Middle East and Central Asia so that it does not need to use the Strait of Malacca (Fallon, 2015, p. 144). In this respect, there are many major energy-related infrastructure projects in the scope of the BRI, such as pipelines to Russia, Central Asia, and the Indian Ocean (Clarke, 2017, p.74).

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is one of the significant projects of the BRI (Cai, 2017, p. 4; Mathews, 2019, p.5), which mainly focuses on energy transportation (Cai, 2017, p. 4). This corridor covers energy, transportation, and infrastructure projects which are roughly 62 billion dollars in size (Mathews, 2019, p.5). This project will link the Xinjiang region to the Port of Gwadar (Cai, 2017, p. 4), which has a strategic location on the border of the Arabian Sea (Mathews, 2019, p.5). This corridor will also provide a second way for China to reach energy resources in the Middle East without using the Strait of Malacca (Cai, 2017, p. 4). As will be discussed in the following sections, the project is important for China's energy security. On the other hand, the project also plays a key role in the industrialization of Pakistan because the project includes many roads, railways, and pipelines (Mathews, 2019, p.5). These infrastructure investments will also probably support domestic investments in Pakistan, and the areas covered by the projects will also develop regionally.

As can be understood from all these, BRI projects require high investment costs. Because of that, China has established multilateral financial institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank and Silk Road Fund in order to support implementing the BRI project (Clarke, 2017, p.71). Funds provided by China through

these multilateral financial institutions and Chinese Banks are used to build roads, railways, bridges, hydroelectric dams, bridges, pipelines, and power grids in over 70 participating countries (Mathews, 2019, p. 3). Interest rates of these loans can vary between zero interest and commercial interest rates (Hurley, Morris, Portelance, 2018, pp. 4-5). In this respect, it can be said that these investment funds are not provided as grants to the participating countries; on the contrary, China gives loans to the participating states, usually at a commercial interest rate (Gerstel, 2018, p.12). Some participating states, such as Laos, Montenegro, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Pakistan, incur huge debt burdens to finance infrastructure projects in the scope of BRI (Hurley, Morris, Portelance, 2018, pp. 17-19). On the other hand, it is also argued that these funds are critical for infrastructure investments of developing states among the BRI participating states (Gerstel, 2018, p.12).

However, states that use credit intending to increase their production and exports may enter into a debt spiral by not being able to pay their current debts (Mathews, 2019, p. 3). For instance, the cost of the China-Laos railway is 6 billion dollars, nearly equal to half of the gross domestic product of Laos (Hurley, Morris, Portelance, 2018, p.17). Laos has also signed a 600 billion U.S. dollar loan agreement with China Exim Bank in the scope of a hydropower project (Hurley, Morris, Portelance, 2018, p.17). This debt far exceeds Laos' ability to pay. There are many countries that borrow beyond their capacity to pay under the BRI. Moreover, China may stipulate accepting additional project agreements to restructure the debts of states that have difficulties in paying their debts, and this situation can put the debtor states into an endless cycle of debt (Chellaney, 2017). Within the scope of the thesis, this subject will be examined further in the following sections.

To summarize, as Ghiasy and Zhou (2017) mentioned, the BRI is a project that aims to connect the economies of Asian and European states. For this reason, the initiative covers developing interstate transportation and interconnection of markets; increasing the production capacities of participant states; and increasing the mobility of capital, products, energy, raw materials, information, and people between these

countries. In addition to the infrastructure projects frequently mentioned above, the BRI also includes fibre optic infrastructure and aerial infrastructure projects to some extent (Ghiassy & Zhou, 2017, p. 2). Although the project was focused on Eurasia at the beginning, it has expanded to other continents over time and has become more comprehensive.

With all these features, the BRI is the largest economic diplomacy program designed since the Marshall Plan of the US (Clover & Hornby, 2015). The projects cover an area where more than 4 billion people live and one-third of the world's wealth (Fallon, 2015, p.140; Ferdinand, 2016, p.950). Indeed, China's economic rise gives it the power to design and execute the Belt and Road Initiative, which is a global project. In light of all these arguments, the initiative can be seen as an economic initiative that serves world peace and welfare, is open to international participation and aims to grow together with other states. However, offensive structural realists say that states generally try to hide the real motivations. There is something hidden between the lines of all these arguments.

Although the initiative nearly covers the whole world, China is at its centre. All trade and transportation lines start and end in China. In this case, the project is actually aiming to expand China's infrastructure all over the world. If it is only looked at from an economic point of view (which will also be examined from a military point of view in later parts of the chapter), China desires to be the centre of the world economy (Lo, 2015, p. 55) and trade. However, becoming the world's commercial hub cannot be an end goal, it can only be a means.

The arguments of offensive structural realists about economic power are quite obvious. The concept of power is used to describe military power in the world of offensive structural realists. According to Mearsheimer, latent power, such as sufficient population, advanced technological level, and economic power, is only crucial to the extent that it can be converted into military power (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 60-61). In this respect, they accept that economy is a crucial component of

building formidable armies. In addition, the level of industrial development of a state determines its capacity to produce more advanced technology militarily (Mearsheimer, 2001). Clearly, the theory considers non-military power elements to the extent that they can be converted into military power.

As analysed in the third chapter, offensive realists examine China's economic and technological rise from a military power-oriented perspective. In this context, the rise of the Chinese economy and industry supports its military development, and its military forces that are being modernized also provide the necessary power to China in order to try to change the balance of power in its favour. The BRI project, which is estimated to have a total cost of 4 trillion dollars (Brewster, 2016, p. 281), include many infrastructure projects that would support the economic growth of China.

According to offensive structural realists, “wealth can rather easily be translated into military might” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p.144). As examined in the third chapter of the thesis, China is transforming some of its growing economic power into military power. China's military expenditure has increased for 27 years continuously (SIPRI, 2022). This is the primary proof that China is using its growing economy for its military development. According to the database of SIPRI (2022), China's military spending increased more than 26 times between 1989 and 2021. China's central government expenditure in 2000 was 2.3 times less than China's national defence budget in 2020 (NBS, n.d.). While China's GDP in 1987 was only 272.97 billion dollars (World Bank, n.d-b), China's military spending in 2021 reached 293.35 billion dollars (SIPRI, 2022). All this data clearly shows that as the Chinese economy grows, China's military budget will continue to increase.

Moreover, China has already officially declared that it aims "to fully transform the people's armed forces into world-class forces by the mid-21st century" (SCIO, 2019a, “Continuing to Strengthen the Military in the Chinese Way”, para.4). This means that China's military modernization process continues. In this respect, the rapid economic development of China is the main driver of its military rise. It is obvious that if China

could not be one of the biggest economies in the world, it would not be the second most military spender country.

According to offensive structural realists, “if China's economy hits the skids and does not recover fears about China will subside considerably” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p.144). However, the Chinese economy has been constantly growing since 1978 (World Bank, n.d-b). Moreover, with the BRI, China aspires to be the centre of the world economy (Lo, 2015, p. 55). As will be discussed in detail later, if the BRI projects succeed, the Chinese economy will grow further, and China's economic and political pressure on the participating states will increase. In this case, China will have obtained more economic resources to continue and intensify its military modernization. When evaluated from this point of view, the BRI policy will cause China to become stronger militarily.

According to the Military Expenditure Database of SIPRI, Military spendings of South Korea, Japan, Russia, and India were 50.23 billion dollars, 54.12 billion dollars, 65.91 billion dollars, and 76.60 billion dollars for 2021, respectively. If we add up the military spending of all these countries, we see that it is less than China's military spending, which was 293.35 billion dollars in 2021. In 2000, China's military spending was half that of Japan (SIPRI, 2022). At the point we have reached today, it is clear that China is getting closer and closer to being the single great power in Asia day by day. As examined in the previous chapter, the biggest obstacle to China in order to a regional hegemon is the US.

As explained in the previous sections, China wishes to replace the US in the region and drive the US out of the region. However, if China wants to face off with the US to be the preeminent power in the Asia Pacific region, it should gain momentum in its military rise. In this respect, the economic side of BRI can be read as a project that can aim to boost the economy of China in order to support its military development. If China can drive the US out of the Asia-Pacific region, it will become the single great power in the region, in other words, it will be a regional hegemon. From this

point of view, if the BRI projects succeed, they will serve the military rise of China and the purpose of establishing hegemony. This is only the economic aspect of the BRI. The strategic side of the initiative will be analysed in further sections of the chapter.

However, before analysing the strategic aspect of the initiative, China's official claims about the BRI will be examined in order to compare with the argument of offensive structural realism about strategic aspects of the initiative. In this way, while China's desire for hegemony is tested through the Silk Road projects, we will have more data to compare the discourses of offensive structural realism.

5.3. China's Official Discourses about Belt and Road Initiative

President Xi Jinping describes the Belt and Road Initiative as "...a project of the century" (Xi, 2017, para.1). The project seems that it deserves this description with its global scope and large budget. China mentions the benefits of the BRI for the world in many official documents and statements about the initiative. In official documents of China, the history of initiative is identified with the Silk Road. China refers to the legacy of the Silk Road and its benefits to the nations of the world in the past when it emphasizes the benefits of the BRI.

In the *Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road*, which was jointly published by National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, Silk Road Spirit was described as "peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit" (National Development and Reform Commission et al., 2015, "Preference", para. 1). In his speech, President Xi Jinping (2017) emphasized that ancient Silk Road routes passed through many geographies where different civilizations and religions were born. This connection has fostered interaction and mutual respect between varied civilizations, religions, and races. In these geographies, capital, technology, and

people flowed freely; and the common focal point was maintaining prosperity (Xi, 2017).

China argues that the Silk Road tremendously influenced the prosperity and growth of the nations along the road and contributed advancement of human civilisation (National Development and Reform Commission et al., 2015, “Preference”, para. 1). In this respect, China emphasizes that the legacy of the Silk Road is a common heritage of the world (National Development and Reform Commission et al., 2015, “Preference”, para. 1; Xi, 2017). According to President Xi Jinping (2017):

The Belt and Road Initiative is rooted in the ancient Silk Road. It focuses on the Asian, European and African continents, but is also open to all other countries. All countries, from either Asia, Europe, Africa or the Americas, can be international cooperation partners of the Belt and Road Initiative. The pursuit of this initiative is based on extensive consultation and its benefits will be shared by us all (Xi, 2017, para. 41).

China claims that preserving the Silk Road Spirit is considerable for our century when world states struggle with the slow recovery of the world economy, difficulties of development and the complex structure of the international sphere (National Development and Reform Commission et al., 2015, “Preference”, para. 2, “Background”, para.1). The BRI was built within these dynamics. According to NDRC et al. (2015), the BRI adopts the phenomenon of economic globalization, cultural diversity, multipolarity, and aims to encourage free trade and open world economy. It also focuses on the effective distribution of resources, excessively integration of markets and boosting the economic coordination between participant states. In light of all these goals, NDRC et al. emphasizes that the initiative will benefit all humanity and serve world peace and development (National Development and Reform Commission et al., 2015, “Background”, para. 2).

As also emphasized in the previous section, the initiative aims to assist the integration of Europe, Asia, and African continents (National Development and Reform Commission et al., 2015, “Background”, para. 3). At this point, China emphasizes that the initiative will assist in coordinating the developmental path of countries,

economic integration, reveal the true potential of markets, provide employment, support the interconnectivity between different societies, and create peace, harmony, friendship, mutual understanding, mutual trust and prosperity among the participants (National Development and Reform Commission et al., 2015).

As analysed above, the peace, openness, harmony, and mutual interest notions that China used to describe the BRI project were also used to describe the historical Silk Road. At this point, it is overtly clear that official claims of China consciously fall into anachronism, and China is romanticizing the historical Silk Road to identify it with the Belt and Road Initiative. They are re-fictionalizing the historical Silk Road with today's values. Through these concepts, they construct a bridge between the Silk Road and the Belt and Road Initiative, and they use the fictional illusion of the Silk Road spirit to glorify the benefits of the BRI for participating countries. In essence, the Belt and Road projects primarily serve China's economic growth, and China is at the centre of almost all projects. Pipelines, railways and highways built within the scope of the project generally start from China and end in China. Even if these projects provide development opportunities for other nations, it is China that will benefit most from the BRI. In this respect, before examining China's official statements about the objectives of the project, it is worth noting that; regardless of the aims of the BRI and its implications for the participating states, the historical ties China has put forward to market the project does not go beyond enthusiastic rhetoric.

Apart from these statements, China also mentions some concrete benefits of the project for itself. NDRC et al. (2015) emphasise that the initiative will help China in order to depth its connectivity with the world economy and serves as an undeniable opportunity for the country to cooperate with all world states. In this respect, China also declares that it will use its capacity to take more responsibility to contribute to world peace and development (National Development and Reform Commission et al., 2015, "Background", para. 4). These arguments are actually reflections of China's efforts to develop its commercial partnerships with world states and to become a rule-making state in international trade.

However, China generally emphasizes the benefits of the initiative for the participants rather than the benefits for itself. China often refers to these benefits as benefits for all humanity. These benefits are grouped under five headings: "...promote policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people bonds..." (National Development and Reform Commission et al., 2015, "IV. Cooperation Priorities", para. 1).

NDRC et al. (2015) clarified these five headings in their official paper. According to this paper, political coordination is the first column of the initiative, which means improving political coordination and communication, mutual trust, and shared interests between participating countries' governments. Political coordination will enhance problem-solving mechanisms and supports the conducting of large-scale projects (National Development and Reform Commission et al., 2015, "IV. Cooperation Priorities").

The second column, and probably the most important one, is facilities connectivity. As explained by NDRC et al. (2015), China aims to create an infrastructure network connecting all sub-regions in Europe, Africa, and Asia with facility connectivity. As mentioned above, facility connectivity involves lots of railway, road, port, and energy transportation and power infrastructure projects. In addition, China aims to encourage building land-water transportation channels, increase the number of voyages, and enhance aviation infrastructure and civil aviation cooperation (National Development and Reform Commission et al., 2015, "IV. Cooperation Priorities").

NDRC et al. (2015) determined unimpeded trade as the third column of the initiative. In the scope of unimpeded trade, China aims to remove trade and investment barriers, enter into agreements on bilateral investment protection and avoid double taxation, and encourage opening free trade areas. They also emphasize the importance of enhancing the scope of mutual investment fields, like forestry, agriculture, deep sea fishing, marine bio-pharmacy, ocean engineering, tourism and so on. They also desire

to enhance cooperation on the development and exploration of fossil fuels and alternative energy resources (National Development and Reform Commission et al., 2015, “IV. Cooperation Priorities”).

Financial integration is the fourth column of the initiative, which is needed to enhance financial cooperation in order to create more favourable financing, investment and credit information systems (National Development and Reform Commission et al., 2015, “IV. Cooperation Priorities”).

The last column is named people to people bond. This main heading aims to gain public support for multilateral cooperation by supporting cultural and academic exchange programs, personnel exchange programs, festivals, and media cooperation (National Development and Reform Commission et al., 2015, “IV. Cooperation Priorities”).

China officially says that these five pillars will be key to the success of the Belt and Road Initiative. It emphasizes that the beneficiary of the BRI is all humanity and draws attention to the fact that the project is open to the participation of all states, regional and international organisations (National Development and Reform Commission et al., 2015). Additionally, it means that even the United States can become a member state of the initiative (Zhang, 2018, p.332). At this point, based on the fact that China and the USA are two great powers in competition with each other, it can be thought that this invitation is only rhetoric.

However, this does not mean that the initiative is not inclusive. According to the data of the Green Finance & Development Center, there are 147 participating states in the BRI project (Nedopil, 2022). According to a study by Nedopil (2022), neighbouring states of China, such as Malaysia, Pakistan, Vietnam, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Indonesia, have signed a memorandum of understanding and became a participant in the BRI. In addition, Nedopil states that Russia has not signed a memorandum of understanding yet, so its situation is uncertain (Nedopil, 2022). However, as

mentioned in the previous section, Russia is a part of economic corridors in the scope of the Silk Road Economic Belt.

According to offensive structural realism, these states are the ones that will be most affected by the possible hegemony of China because of their geographical proximity. As mentioned in detail in the previous chapters, land operations are still decisive in wars, and the stopping power of water still prevents the power projections of the military forces. If China wants to be a hegemon, cooperating with China and contributing to its economic rise will be the most irrational scenario for its neighbours. If BRI has the potential to shift the balance of power in favour of its participants, it may become desirable for participant states. However, in this case, the BRI would be an irrational policy for China, which is the architect and executive of the initiative, because international politics is a zero-sum game, and increasing the power of a state leads to decreasing the powers of another state (Mearsheimer, 2001). If BRI projects aim to contribute mutual interest of all participants, as President Xi claims, the success of these projects will weaken China's position in the balance of power. At this point, according to offensive realist thought, in order for China's BRI project to be considered a rational decision, it must serve to shift the balance of power in favour of China.

Considering the official statements of China, the initiative seems to be of great benefit to both the participating states and China itself. China's role in world politics and its economy will be positively affected by the project, while the infrastructure deficiencies of the participating states will be completed. Moreover, participating states and China will be able to sell their raw materials and products to other states more quickly and easily. In this context, if China's official arguments are correct, all parties benefit from the initiative, so this project is a positive-sum game. In this case, the initiative will become unexplainable with any realist theory.

According to the realist mind, it is unreasonable for a state that wants to be a hegemon to support its neighbouring states to build roads, bridges, energy lines, ports, and

railways that can be used against it in a possible war. In addition to these, the initiative seems to support the economic and industrial development of China's neighbouring states. As mentioned in the previous chapters, economic power and the level of industrial development are the factors which mostly affect military power.

If the offensive structural realists' arguments are true and China seeks hegemony, the BRI must fundamentally serve the interests of China. This project, which they call the project of the century, should coincide with their aim of changing the balance of power in their favour. At this point, the benefits of the initiative for China should be examined in terms of literature and compared with China's official discourses, arguments of offensive structural realists, also with policies and facts.

5.4. The Purposes of Belt and Road Initiative and Offensive Structural Realism

5.4.1. Belt and Road Initiative and China's Economic Dominance

China claims that the project was developed to benefit all its participants (National Development and Reform Commission et al., 2015; Xi, 2017). Apart from this, China emphasizes that although the initiative is proposed by itself, it does not have the right to veto, so states, private and public initiatives can participate in the Belt projects without permission (Ghiasy & Zhou, 2017, p. 11). However, it should not be forgotten that the projects within the scope of BRI are led by China. Chinese financial institutions and banks provide loans to the participants to realise them. As a matter of fact, China is aware that many participating countries lack the necessary financial means to realize these projects (Ghiasy & Zhou, 2017, p. 11). Although countries are free to participate in the projects or not, China is the rule maker in the initiative. If a state wants to get a loan from China within the scope of the BRI projects, it has to comply with the rules set by China.

The Belt and Road Initiative is a project that has both economic and political dimensions. Since its announcement in 2013, many books, academic articles and

newspaper articles have been written about the project, and many different arguments have been produced about the purposes of the project. Since the project has examined in a multidisciplinary manner over many fields such as economy, finance, energy, food security, diplomacy, international relations, political science, local governments, security, transportation and many more, many different conclusions have been reached in the literature regarding the aims of the project. Due to the multidisciplinary nature of the case, it becomes impossible to classify the views in the literature under certain groups.

However, the general opinion is that while the project will support participating countries at different levels, it will increase China's role in world politics. Of course, the critical issue here is how to distribute the cake slices. In other words, in whose favour will the balance of power change due to the initiative? At this point, according to the realist point of view, the project should change the balance of power in favour of China because it is created, financed, and conducted by China. Otherwise, the initiative will not serve China's hegemony; and China will be considered an irrational actor. Before coming to a conclusion on this issue, it is necessary to analyse China's gains from BRI.

As stated by Zhang (2018), towards the end of 2012, the idea that China was facing three fundamental problems began to spread in strategic circles. This period coincided with the beginning of Xi Jinping's presidency. One of these problems was industrial overcapacity and the slowdown in the growth rate (Zhang, 2018, p.330). The growth rate of China's economy was affected by the Global Financial Crisis of 2008, and it entered a period of slowdown in 2012 (Wang, 2016, p. 457). As it is detailed in the third chapter of the thesis, the Chinese economy has an export-oriented model based on cheap labour and FDIs. After the crisis, the market demand in the US and Europe reduced (Junxian & Yan, 2016, p.108). This decrease in demand in the world's largest markets, combined with the effects of the crisis, has put the Chinese economy into trouble.

According to an analysis by Junxian & Yan (2016), China decided to encourage domestic consumption in order to preserve its economic growth rather than try to find supplementary markets in 2008. In this respect, it started a 4 trillion yuan stimulus package. Although this provided an economic growth of over 9 per cent for China in the short term, by 2012, the economic growth rate began to fall below 8 per cent. Because of the saving habits of the people and social security systems in China, the stimulus packages were not effective in increasing domestic consumption; instead, they supported the increase in production capacity in China. At this point, China has tended to seek alternative markets to the Western market to use its excessive production capacity. However, there were connectivity problems between regions. The initiative emerged as a response to these problems (Junxian & Yan, 2016, p.108). It is one of the reasons for these huge infrastructure investments made within the scope of the initiative.

The construction industry has played a vital role in China's economic growth. However, China has been making high infrastructure investments for a long time, so it closed the crucial infrastructure deficiencies in its territories. In this context, Chinese construction companies gain lots of experience in the building sector and train enough staff who have technical knowledge. However, the 2008 crisis taught us that excessive booming in a sector might cause dramatic crises. After the crisis, the construction industry in China also faced some difficulties. To respond to these problems, China also wants to decrease the role of domestic infrastructure investments in its growth (Djankov, 2016, p.7). In this respect, the initiative aims to fortify the economic integration of China with other states and to invest the excess capacity of China in the steel, cement, and construction sectors and the country's excessive savings reserves to foreign countries (OSD, 2021, pp. 20-21).

According to Djankov (2016), another critical aim of the initiative is to create new investment opportunities for construction and construction-related equipment manufacturing companies in China. According to China's calculations, loans from China will be used to purchase construction services, equipment, and labour from

Chinese companies by borrower states. The development of the infrastructures of BRI participating countries can also support their economic growth, and these countries can demand more Chinese goods and services thanks to their growing economies. As reported by Djankov, some studies also confirm that this estimate has come partly true (Djankov, 2016, p.7).

In addition, there is also an overcapacity problem in the production of high-value-added goods, such as solar panels and power generation equipment in China, so companies in these sectors face serious economic difficulties. (Cheng, 2015). It is obvious that the export of these products will contribute to China's economy. China estimates that the initiative will facilitate the export of high-value-added Chinese goods, and high-speed rail technology appears to be the most promising of these technologies (Cai, 2017, pp. 9-11). As cited by Cai (2017), according to Chinese strategists, the demand for Chinese-made high-speed rail lines will increase in every part of Asia thanks to the BRI. Cai also argues that China expects that the BRI participants will be more willing to buy high-end Chinese products than developed Western countries. All these arguments show that one purpose of the initiative is to support China's economic growth. It should be reminded here again that China's economic growth will support its military growth.

It is understandable that both problems that are mentioned above push China to seek new policies. Like every state, China also wants to gain power, and one of the key ways to do this is to develop economically. Of course, China, which has become the world's second-largest economy with high growth rates for decades, wants to continue its high growth rates. China's massive infrastructure investments in its neighbours and its effort to increase its access to other markets do not seem like an aggressive stance.

However, many foreign policy analysts interpret the initiative as China's attempt to gain political advantages over its neighbours (Cai, 2017, p.1). OSD (2021) emphasizes that investments of Chinese companies in the BRI participant countries

cause unilateral dependence between participating countries and China (OSD, 2021, pp. 20-21). Even India and Russia, the other great powers in the region, complain about their trade imbalances with China (Junxian & Yan, 2016, p. 118). China manufactures many products cheaply thanks to its cheap labour force. When these products can be delivered to other regions faster and cheaper on account of the new roads, ports and railways built within the scope of BRI projects, the companies of BRI participating countries will have a very low chance of competing with Chinese products. Moreover, as mentioned in detail in the previous section, China aims to remove protectionist barriers between participating countries and liberalize trade within the scope of the initiative. When all these are taken into account, it can be thought that China is trying to establish economic dominance over its neighbour states. China can use this power as a means of pressure to states to change their policies to serve China's interests. This could make China the dominant power in the region.

For example, China can use the loans it gives to participant countries as leverage for its own interests (OSD, 2021, pp. 20-21). Mathews (2019) says that “strategically the BRI draws countries into China’s orbit, through the building of infrastructure financed through loans from Chinese and China-promoted banks” (p.1). At this point, many authors in the literature claim that taking loans from China for BRI projects can lead countries into a debt trap (Chellaney, 2017; Gerstel, 2018; Abi-Habib, 2018a; Mathews, 2019; Beeson & Crawford, 2022).

According to an analysis by Chellaney (2017), the Belt and Road Initiative was planned in order to increase China's geostrategic interests. Within the scope of the initiative, China gave immense loans to participants to support their investment projects. However, these loans make participating countries vulnerable to the political influence of China.

At this point, it is necessary to keep in mind that loans given by China are not provided as grants to the participating countries, on the contrary, China gives loans

usually at a commercial interest rate; in this respect, although China provides large loans to developing countries to strengthen their infrastructure, some countries seem unable to pay off these debts in the future (Gerstel, 2018, p.12).

A study which examines debt contracts between China and foreign governments shows that cancellation and acceleration clauses in contracts make it easier for China to put pressure on the debtor state. According to this study, in 9 out of 10 agreements, China reserved the right to terminate the contract and seek immediate repayment in case of significant changes in the laws and policies of the debtor state (Gelpern et al. 2021, as cited in Beeson & Crawford, 2022, p.11). This situation gives China the power to dictate policies which serve its interest to debtor states and causes to increase China's influence in the region.

Apart from that, China is putting pressure on countries that are having trouble paying their debts to transfer projects to Chinese state-owned companies (Chellaney, 2017). This is where the debt trap comes into play. Chellaney (2017) claims that the failure of projects may be better for China; because the increase in participant states' debt burden may cause China's increasing political pressure on these countries. According to Abi-Habib, Hambantota Port Development Project in Sri Lanka is one of these failed projects. Although the port is on a highly operated route, only 34 ships used the port in 2012. However, this situation did not affect the fact that Sri Lanka has to pay its debts. After the negotiation between China and Sri Lanka, the Sri Lanka government accepted to transfer of operating rights of the port and 15,000 acres of land around the port to China for 99 years (Abi-Habib, 2018a).

The location of the port offers us important clues about this strategic move of China. As reported by Abi-Habib, Hambantota port is close to the coastline of India and on a highly operated route. She claims that even Chinese officers argue that China will use Hambantota port only for commercial purposes; Sri Lankan officials declare that China has been negotiating the island's strategic and intelligence possibilities from the beginning. Although Sri Lanka's \$1 billion in debt has been written off, it still has

lots of debt to China, and the interest rates on these loans are higher than those from other international creditors. Even though the final lease agreement forbids military use of the port, Indian authorities fear that Sri Lanka would give permission to China to use the port for military means in return for its debts being cleaned (Abi-Habib, 2018a).

In this direction, some participating countries cancel their projects that require high amounts of borrowing. According to the news published by Reuters Staff (2018), Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad declared that Malaysia decided to cancel East Coast Rail Link project and a gas line pipeline project until Malaysia became able to afford these projects.

There are other recent examples that illustrate this situation. As emphasised in previous chapters, China is enlarging islands in the South China Sea and constructing military facilities in these islands (Jingdong, p.2019, p.111). Many states have rights over this region. However, China is ignoring this situation and militarizing these islands. The foreign ministry of the ASEAN states had met to reach a joint decision on this issue (Mogato et al., 2016). However, "...China has used its clout to push Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand to block a united ASEAN stand against China's aggressive pursuit of its territorial claims in the South China Sea" (Chellaney, 2017, para.5). These BRI participating states have made a decision against their own interests because of the pressure exerted by China's loans. In this respect, these cases show that China is using loans that it gave in the scope of the BRI project in order to gain influence in different areas of the world (Abi-Habib, 2018a). At this point, Chellaney (2017) argues that the BRI is a neo-colonial project that aims to create a hegemonic security, trade, transportation, and communication link.

All these arguments show that China wants not only to continue its economic rise but also wants to establish economic and political dominance over its neighbours. As examined in previous sections, China argues that the project aims to support infrastructure investments in developing countries. It is an undeniable fact that the

project will support the infrastructure developments of some participating countries and play an important role in the development of the economies of these countries. However, when projects are evaluated strategically, it is shown that the BRI essentially serves China the most.

China provides loans to participating countries within the scope of the BRI projects and expects them to repay these loans with interest. “China’s interests are generally well protected since the loans advanced are frequently tied to contracting with Chinese firms for construction, and they frequently employ Chinese suppliers and labor” (Mathews, 2019, p. 17). In this case, the money given to the countries with loans returns to China with its interest receivables and added value. In addition, thanks to the new railways, ports and roads extending from China to other countries, the transportation cost and time of the products exported by China will decrease. This is another situation that will contribute greatly to the Chinese economy.

In addition to all this, China reserves the right to demand immediate repayment of loans extended to other countries. Although this option is subject to particular conditions, China's current economic and military strength will certainly allow it to stretch these conditions. Based on the Sri Lanka case, it can be argued that countries using high credits are vulnerable to political pressure from China. In this context, China may request some privileges from states that cannot pay their debts.

China has not demanded land for military use in return for debts from countries that have not paid their debts, and it has not used Hambantota port for military purposes. However, according to offensive structural realism, states cannot know how other states act in the future. If the regional and international conjunctures are suitable in the future, China may request these kinds of permissions from debtor states that cannot pay their debts. In this respect, Mathews (2019) emphasizes that the BRI is a smart policy that "enhances China’s economic power and brings a number of countries into China’s economic orbit, without deliberately antagonizing or threatening the US in doing so" (p.6).

In current Asia-Pacific politics, the United States is still the predominant power, and this reality limits China's political range of motion. For this reason, the BRI project is also trying to increase China's mobility by increasing China's trade and energy security. The Pakistan Economic Corridor, which is the most ambitious project of the New Silk Road, is a direct reflection of this aim.

As emphasized in detail in the previous chapter, the US has lots of overseas military bases and regional allies in the Asia Pacific region. The US can use its naval bases and territories of its allies during a possible Sino-American conflict or war. Moreover, it has absolute military superiority on the seas; and this situation is a vital security problem for China. In the previous section, it was mentioned that China tried to strengthen its coastal defence, turned the disputed islets in the South China Sea into floating military bases and modernized its army in order to overcome this situation. It was even claimed that increasing US activity in the region is one of the reasons for China's growing aggression against Taiwan.

In addition, the US made some changes in its Asian policy to prevent the rise of China. In this respect, they have introduced the Asian rebalancing strategy which started in the Obama era. This strategic movement became another fundamental problem that China faced (Junxian & Yan, 2016, p.107; Wang, 2016, pp. 455-456; Zhang, 2018, p.330). The US's efforts to improve its relations with the Asian states were affecting China's relations with its neighbours (Zhang, 2018, p.330). In addition, the US tried to increase its military pressure on China by supporting the Philippines, Vietnam, and Japan to follow more ambitious policies in the scope of their territorial disputes with China (Junxian & Yan, 2016, pp.107-108). This situation is likely to be perceived as a security threat by China. The US supported the interests of these states in the East and South China Sea, and it has tried to disrupt the relations between China and its maritime neighbours (Junxian & Yan, 2016, pp.107-108).

As Wang (2016) also points out in his study, US-China relations deteriorated over nearly all issues that were important for the interest of China in 2010. The US decision

to sell arms to Taiwan and Obama's meeting with the Dalai Lama are some clear signs of this deterioration. Wang also draws attention to the fact that China's relations have deteriorated not only with the US. While the problems between South Korea and North Korea affect China's relations with South Korea, the sovereignty dispute over Diaoyu Island affects relations between Japan and China. "All these developments seem to remind Chinese leaders that US is pushing hard in Asia Pacific, and in order to maintain its primacy in Asia it is working to build an Asian version of NATO to contain China by taking advantage of the territorial disputes around China" (p. 458). According to Wang, this situation pushes China to invest in its neighbour countries in order to counterbalance the pressure of the US. In this context, he argues that the BRI emerges to deal with this dominant position of the US (Wang, 2016, p. 458). In this respect, the BRI may also be an opportunity to cement the relationship between China and its neighbourhoods. These participating countries will probably be more dependent on the Chinese economy, products, and loans. This circumstance will possibly negatively influence these states' relations with the United States and other regional powers like India and Russia.

According to Mearsheimer, rising China will try to increase its dominance over Asia in order to become a regional hegemon. It will specifically want to increase the power disparity between itself and other regional power. The increase in China's military power will give it the power to influence the behaviour of its neighbour states (Mearsheimer, 2010, p. 389). It is clear that the BRI is a policy that serves all these purposes. First of all, the project increases China's economic power, which is the main generator of its military rise.

As analysed in detail in this part of the thesis, the BRI projects aim to continue China's immense economic rise, strengthen China's position in international trade, and increase the economic and political pressure of China on participating countries. The primary aim of China, which is trying to ensure the integrity of the infrastructure between the Asian, European and African continents with its huge infrastructure

investments, is to transport the goods that it produces to other geographies more cheaply, safely, and faster.

As mentioned in detail in this section, BRI also aims to support China's economic growth by solving China's overcapacity problem. In this respect, many port and infrastructure projects, which are financed by China within the scope of BRI, are carried out by Chinese construction companies. In this way, China aims to overcome its overcapacity problem in the construction sector, which plays an important role in its economic growth, and to continue the role of its construction sector in its economic development.

China has been steadily increasing its military spending for 27 years; its military expenditures have increased 26 times in just 32 years (SIPRI, 2022). In this respect, it is obvious that China is using its growing economy for its military development. The success of BRI projects will support China's economic rise and allow it to allocate more resources for its military modernization. This situation will serve its purpose of being a regional hegemon.

In addition, within the scope of BRI projects, some participating countries incur huge debt burdens that far exceed their ability to pay. When these states cannot pay their debts, they fall into the debt trap and become vulnerable to China's economic and political pressures. This situation increases China's dominance over the participant states. When all this is taken into account, it is clear that the BRI, which seems like an economy-oriented project, actually serves China's military development and desire for hegemony.

So far, aspects of BRI that serve China's regional economic dominance, and economic and military rise have been analysed in general. It is clear that the BRI project generally aims to increase China's economic hegemony in the region.

There are also many arguments in the literature that the initiative has military and defence purposes. The remainder of the chapter will examine the security objectives of the BRI project in this context.

5.4.2. Belt and Road Initiative and China's Strategic Aims

Given that cheaper than the other ways, international trade is conducted through sea transportation roads at the present time. In this respect, China is also dependent on maritime trade for exports of its products and imports of raw materials and energy resources. Moreover, China's neighbour states have weak land transport infrastructures. There are also many security problems like the Kashmir conflict, the Afghanistan conflict, internal conflict in Myanmar. These situations also push China to use sea transportation.

Energy imports are also a matter of strategic importance for China, and BRI involves lots of energy infrastructure and supply projects. Energy is vital for all industrial sectors, and it is still mainly obtained from fossil fuels, and fossil fuel is only procured from certain parts of the world. According to the analysis of Djankov, energy sufficiency is a critical issue for China because the energy demand of China has risen more than five times since 1980. Recently, China became the largest oil importer and energy consumer in the world (Djankov, 2016, p.7).

In this context, an estimated 85 per cent of China's imports (Grieger, 2016, p.8) and 80 per cent of its energy supplies are transported by sea through the Malacca Strait (Fallon, 2015, p.144; Ghiasy & Zhou, 2017, p.7). This circumstance also makes China's energy supply fragile (Fallon, 2015, p.144; Campbell, 2017) because the Malacca Strait is secured by the United States Navy (Grieger, 2016, p.8; Ghiasy & Zhou, 2017, p.7, 29). In this respect, the US has the military capacity to interrupt China's maritime trade during a possible conflict (Grieger, 2016, p.8; Ghiasy & Zhou, 2017, p.7, 29). In such a case, it is obvious that China's imports and exports, and therefore its economy, will suffer. The BRI was also designed in order to create new

trade and energy supply routes that run through Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and Pakistan (Ghiasy & Zhou, 2017, p.7). If the railway, road, and energy infrastructure investments made within the scope of the New Silk Road project are successful, there will be developed alternative trade and energy supply routes that China can use instead of maritime routes and Malacca Strait. Thus, China will increase its trade and energy security.

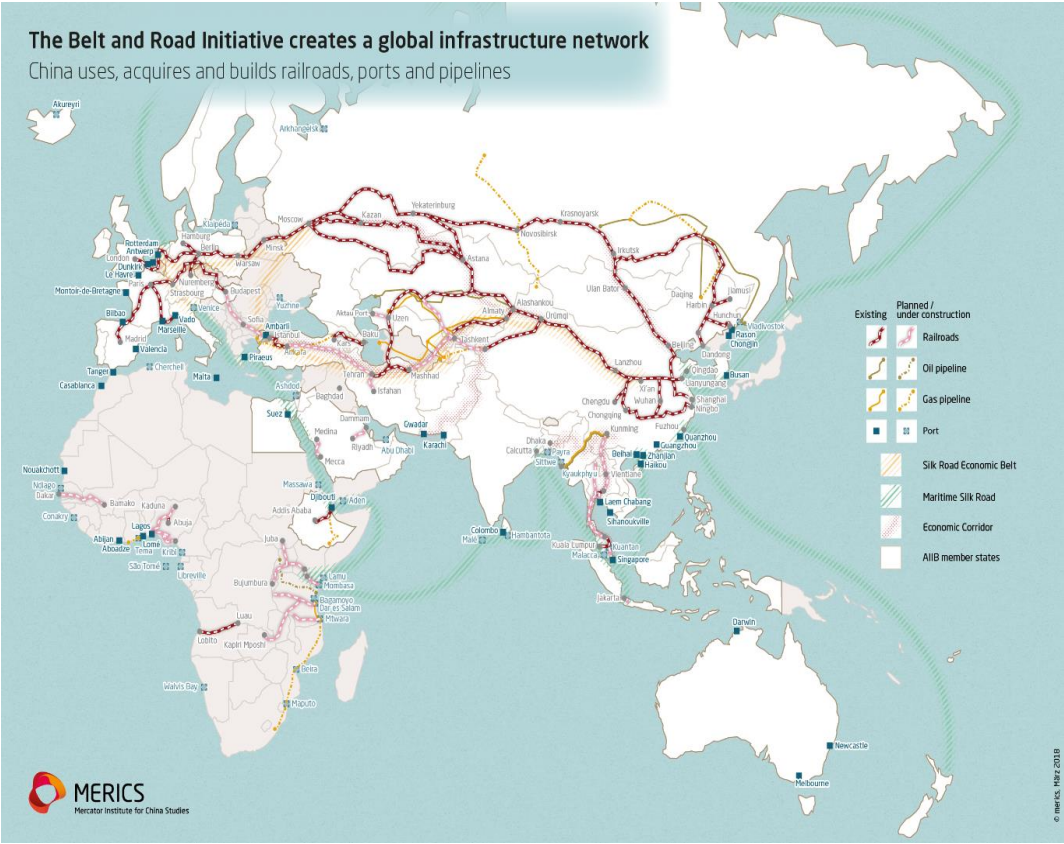


Figure 5. 2: Belt and Road Initiative and Global Infrastructure Network
(Mercator Institute for China Studies, 2018)

Retrieved: <https://www.merics.org/en/tracker/mapping-belt-and-road-initiative-where-we-stand>

In respect of these projects, China is also trying to create an energy corridor passing through the Middle East and Central Asia so that it does not need to use the Strait of Malacca (Fallon, 2015, p. 144). The most vital one of these projects is probably the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor which enables China to reach energy resources without using the Malacca Strait which is controlled by the US. This project includes roads, railways, and pipelines from Pakistan to China, and the value of the project is estimated at approximately 62 billion dollars (Mathews, 2019, p.5). The most important part of the project is the port of Gwadar, which is on the coast of the Indian Ocean and very close to the Persian Gulf. According to Ghiasy & Zhou, the project aims to transport the oil which comes from the Middle East to the cities in China via Pakistan. With this project, China aims to secure its access to oil and reduce oil delivery times by 85 per cent (Ghiasy & Zhou, 2017, p.7).

Up to this point, the project can be seen as a reflection of a smart defensive strategy. As a matter of fact, the corridor will obviously increase China's energy security and trade security. However, at this point, there are some details that cause it to be thought that the project has military purposes as well as defence purposes. Within the scope of BRI, China is financing the construction of ports at strategically important points around the Indian Ocean; moreover, these constructions are conducted by Chinese state-owned companies (Abi-Habib, 2018b). These situations are the basis for considering that these projects are carried out for military purposes.

According to the analysis by Abi-Habib, state-owned companies of China are building strategic ports in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Malaysia, and other places that has geostrategic importance in the Indian Ocean in the scope of the BRI. Although the Chinese authorities highlight that China does not aim to militarize these ports, analysts doubt whether China will militarise these coastal territories like the islands in the South China Sea¹¹. As mentioned above, Sri Lanka could not pay its loan to

¹¹ As it is mentioned in the previous chapter, China is also increasingly seeking to expand its sovereignty over the South China Sea (Grossman, 2020, pp. 183-184) by turning the Spratly islands into strategic military bases (Grossman, 2020, pp. 183-184). For this purpose, China is enlarging the

China, so the Sri Lanka government accepted to transfer of operating rights of the Hambantota port to China for 99 years. Due to this situation, suspicions about the military purposes of the BRI are increasing (Abi-Habib, 2018b).

Gwadar port is a deep port which can be deployed submarines, aircraft carriers (Cai, 2017, p.5), and other largest vessels of China (Kardon, 2020). In this context, the port is quite suitable to be used for military purposes. As repeatedly mentioned, China claims that it will not use these ports for military means. However, the contract for expanding the Gwadar port was won by a Chinese company (Mathews, 2019, p.5), and the port is also leased by China (Ghiasy & Zhou, 2017, p. 7). In this respect, a Chinese company own and operate the port (Kordon, 2020). Abi-Habib claims that Pakistan is having difficulty repaying its debts to Chinese companies even now. It will be more difficult for Pakistan as payments gradually increase in the future (Abi-Habib, 2018b). At this point, China is likely to make pressure on Pakistan to gain military access to Gwadar port which is already leased by itself.

At this point, the following question may come to mind, why are these ports so important militarily? In his article, Brewster (2016) argues that the Indian Ocean has different characteristics in respect of military strategy. He emphasizes that the northern part of the Indian Ocean is enclosed on three sides, and there are only a few entry points which can be used to reach the inside of the Indian Ocean from other seas and oceans. The distance between these main ports surrounding this region is far from each other. Due to these reasons, the states that control these chokepoints and prevent the access of other countries to these ports will gain strategic advantages. For this reason, the states that dominate the region should have a strong naval power. In today's world, the dominant power in this region is the US (Brewster, 2016, pp.271-273) because it has enormous naval power and lots of overseas military bases that extend its naval projection to other geographies.

area of the reefs by landfilling on the sea (Jingdong, p.2019, p.111; Grossman, 2020, pp. 183-184), and it is constructing military facilities on these them (Jingdong, 2019, p. 111).

These ports have critical importance for the coastal security, energy security, and trade security of China. Additionally, if China gains the right to use Gwadar and Hambantota ports for military purposes, China's naval projection will increase in the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. Although this is only a possibility, it should be considered by other regional powers; because states cannot know how other states will behave in the future (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 45).

According to offensive structural realists, the most important factor that pushes states to acquire more power is the desire to feel more secure. In this respect, China's militarization of these ports will alleviate its security concerns because, in this way, China will increase its coastal and trade security. We may note parenthetically, as examined in the third chapter, overseas military bases serve to increase the state's power projection to other geographies. According to Mearsheimer, "...the United States has had to maintain a huge and sophisticated military with bases all over the world so that it can intervene anywhere..." (Mearsheimer, 2014a, p. 23). The US has military bases in nearly 100 different countries (Dreyfuss & Karlin, 2019). In this respect, the US military has extensive power projection that is able to fight everywhere in the world (Mearsheimer, 2010, p. 385). However, China does not have such a wide-scale power projection. It has only one military base in Djibouti, a space station in Argentina, and unconfirmed military entities in Cambodia and Tajikistan (Huwaidin & Antwi-Boateng, 2021, p. 10).

China wants to break through this barrier and increase its power projection. China officially declared that it also aims to increase its overseas infrastructure and strengthens its overseas operation capacity to protect its overseas interests in the scope of its military modernization (SCIO, 2019a, "Protecting China's Overseas Interests", para.2). According to the official view of the United States, "the PRC is seeking to establish a more robust overseas logistics and basing infrastructure to allow the PLA to project and sustain military power at greater distances" (OSD, 2021, p. 130).

In this direction, as examined in the previous chapter, China built an overseas military base in Djibouti, which is located in the Horn of Africa, and militarized the disputable South China Sea islands. It also desires to take control of Taiwan; and continue to modernize its navy. All these policies serve to increase China's mainland security and its power in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. From a strategic point of view, it can be said that China's investments within the scope of BRI, its efforts to increase its sphere of influence on participating countries and its effort to control the ports also serve the purposes of increasing its security and power projection and becoming a regional hegemon in the Asia-Pacific region.

If China increases its naval projection and ensures its coastal, trade and energy security, it will be able to pursue more aggressive policies in the Asia-Pacific region. In addition, if the Belt and Road Initiative succeeds, China's economic rise will continue more intensively, and it will become able to modernize its military more quickly and comprehensively. In this case, China will more quickly reach the power to compete militarily with the United States. In this respect, even if China does not aim to become a regional hegemon, it will become a regional hegemon in practice.

The Belt and Road Initiative will serve to reduce the influence of states such as Russia, India, and the United States in the Asia Pacific region, which could endanger China's economic and military rise and its growing regional influence in the region. The BRI policy will also make the developing countries in the region more dependent on China. China will extend its domination over these countries with both the carrot of industrial development and the stick of the debt trap. In this respect, the initiative will clearly serve the regional hegemony of China.

The initiative is cleverly designed. Each developed project in BRI aims to improve China's relations with participating countries (or increase these participating countries' dependence on China), create new markets for Chinese products and firms, augment the energy and trade security of China, and finally ensure its economic and military rise. Considering its economic and strategic size, the BRI is the most concrete

indicator that China wants to end the US's preeminent position in the Asia-Pacific region. If it succeeds, China will overcome many security problems.

It is also crystal clear that the Belt and Road Initiative policy is highly consistent with China's Taiwan policy, which is analysed in the fourth chapter. While its Taiwan policy aims to increase China's coastal security and military projection, the BRI aims to increase China's energy and trade security, improve its relationship with its neighbours, extend its overseas interest and maintain its economic development, which is the dynamo of its military rise. To sum up, both policies aim to increase China's security and military capability and cement its ascendancy.

In brief, if China's Taiwan policy and the BRI succeed, the balance of power will be changed in favour of China; and China will come very close to achieving regional hegemony, even if it does not desire to be the hegemon.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

What I meant by tragedy is that the structure of the international system forces all states, whether they have revisionist goals or not, to behave as if they were revisionist powers and compete with each other for power (Mearsheimer, 2006c, p. 120).

According to offensive structural realism, anarchy in the international system push states to desire more and more power because the most powerful state in the system is the safest state as well (Mearsheimer, 2001; Layne, 2002). In this situation, the most powerful state in the system is the hegemon. That is why offensive structural realists argue that all states want to be a hegemon at the end of the day. Although “every state might want to be king of the hill”, the amount of existing power of states determines their range of motion (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 37). For this reason, although every state wants to be the hegemon, only very powerful states can strive to be the hegemon. Because of that, the rise of China has attracted the attention of offensive structural realists. The main feature that distinguishes China from other states is that China has been getting stronger for a long time.

China has risen and continues to rise economically, thanks to its successful economic transformation process. As offensive structural realists predict, China is using the resources it has obtained from its economic rise to increasing its military power. As explained in the thesis, its military spending increased more than 26 times between 1989 and 2021 (SIPRI, 2022). According to China’s official claims, the main purpose of China's desire for power is due to its security concern and willingness to protect its gains in the international arena. Beijing argues that "the Chinese nation does not

have the gene to invade others and dominate the world" (SCIO, 2019b, "5. China will never seek hegemony", para. 2).

However, the actions of states are policies which they apply. In this respect, the possible gains of states that they will acquire from their policies and the goals that they reach as a result of their policies indicate their true intentions. Of course, states sometimes make statements about the purposes of their policies. In this respect, China's official statements about its economic rise, military modernization plan, Taiwan question, and the Belt and Road Initiative are also analysed in the scope of the thesis. However, these statements, like the claims of offensive structural realists, cannot be considered true unless they are not supported by proof.

Within the scope of the thesis, it has been evaluated the offensive structural realists' arguments that rising China is trying (or will try) to become a regional hegemon. In order to find an answer to this question, the Taiwan question and the Belt and Road Initiative cases are examined. As a result of the thesis, it is concluded that the Taiwan question and the Belt and Road Initiative will serve to change the balance of power in favour of China. If these policies are successful, China will become more dominant in the Asia-Pacific region, even if it does not desire to be a hegemon. If this happens, China will come close to achieving regional hegemony, or maybe it will be a regional hegemon. The thesis has reached lots of concrete evidence in this regard.

The first one of these proofs is China's comprehensive military modernization plan. Mearsheimer argues that rising China will want to be so powerful as that other regional states cannot harm it (Mearsheimer, 2014b). That is the prerequisite for China to become a regional hegemon because the condition of being a regional hegemon is to be the only great power in the region. According to the findings in the thesis, China's military modernization aims to make China the single great power in the Asia-Pacific region.

While China's military spending was half that of Japan in 2000, today China alone spends more on the military than Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Japan, South

Korea, Mongolia, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Russia combined (SIPRI, 2022). At this point, it is clear that the claims of the offensive structural realists that the economic rise of the states will cause their strengthening in terms of the military are valid for the case of China's rise.

As analysed in the third chapter, China argues that the main purpose of its military modernization is to protect its development interests and ensure its security. According to the findings of the thesis, these claims are completely true. The current strength of the US military, its increasing military presence in Asia, its military projection that is reaching all over the world, and its good relations with Asian states are major threats to China's security and development. However, defence spending is military spending. Its military development is increasing not only its security but also its strength. In the end, China's military rise will cause it to become the dominant power in the region.

In this case, it can be said that the only obstacle to China's regional hegemony is the United States' preeminent position in the region. However, China also follows some policies to reduce the power and influence of the US in the Asia-Pacific region. Within this scope, China is strengthening its land armies, and adding new aircraft and warships to its military inventory. More importantly, China, which realized the military superiority of the US in informationized warfare and the importance of technology in new-generation wars, has started to modernize its military in order to compete with the United States. It is investing in cutting-edge technologies like artificial intelligence, anti-satellite weapons, cyber security, unmanned combat vehicles, real-time surveillance, reconnaissance, warning system, and so on. Apart from these, China's development of anti-access/area-denial and nuclear retaliation capacities are directly aimed at preventing the US from intervening in the region during a possible conflict. All these military technologies are offensive in nature as they will increase China's military power.

All these developments are proof that, as offensive structural realists claim, China is trying to push the US, which it sees as the main threat to its security, out of the Asia-Pacific region. As mentioned before, China currently spends more on its military than almost all of its neighbour countries. Because of that, if it manages to reduce US influence in the Asia-Pacific, it may become the single great power in the region. If China succeeds in this, it will have the power to influence other states' decisions, although it has emphasized that it does not want to dominate other states. China can use this irresistible power to pursue unilateral aggressive policies and even invade territories of other countries. A state's position in the balance of power determines the limit of what it can do. Therefore, China's military modernization plan serves the purpose of hegemony.

The second proof that the policies pursued by rising China serve its purpose of hegemony is the possible consequences of its Taiwan policy. Since its foundation, the People's Republic of China has considered Taiwan as a part of mainland China. Considering its military strength and economic size, Taiwan does not pose a direct threat to China. It is unilaterally dependent on the United States in terms of defence. At this point, Taiwan's fate seems to depend on the power games between the US and China.

However, rising China has started to follow more aggressive policies against Taiwan. According to white papers of China and provisions of the 2005 Anti-Secession Law, China considers Taiwan's independence as *casus belli*. In its last white paper, China officially declared that it will not allow the separation of Taiwan from mainland China thanks to its remarkable growth in terms of military, economic, cultural, and technological power (SCIO, 2022). In this respect, China has made a statement showing that it is aware of its potential instead of following a low-profile policy. China's intensifying aggressive stance on Taiwan is not limited to its discourses. China, which has recently increased its military activity in the East China Sea, South China Sea, and the north-western part of the Pacific Ocean, violated Taiwan's Air

Defence Identification Zone many times and held many realistic military exercises, including Taiwan's invasion scenarios.

As indicated in the thesis, China's aggressive attitude to Taiwan has continued since the end of the Chinese Civil War. From that time, many crises have taken place between China and Taiwan, which were suspended with the military involvement of the US. However, given China's increasing economic, technological, diplomatic, and military power, it is clear that China is becoming more and more dangerous to Taiwan's security. The critical point here is that stronger states can pursue more aggressive policies, as offensive structural realists claim.

As emphasized in the third and fourth chapters of the thesis, China has tried to develop new military technologies, such as anti-access/area denial capacity, nuclear retaliation, early warning systems, and anti-satellite weapons, in order to prevent the US military from intervening in Taiwan Strait during a possible conflict. These technological developments, the extent of its military modernization, and its official declarations indicate that rising China will conduct an operation in Taiwan when PLA acquire enough power to confront the US military in the region.

One reason for China's desire to unite with Taiwan is to ensure its coastal and trade security. This argument also coincides with the claims of offensive structural realists about the desire of states to increase their own security. However, Taiwan's unification with China will change the balance of power in the Asia-Pacific region in favour of China. According to the findings in the thesis, it has been concluded that China's Taiwan policy reflects its desire to be a regional hegemon.

Firstly, if China takes control of Taiwan, its latent power will increase. Taiwan's relatively advanced economic power and 24 million population will support the economy of China. Moreover, if the Taiwan question is solved in China's favour, China will become more able to allocate its resources to other political objectives.

These situations will increase China's economic resources, which can be transferred to military power.

As emphasized before, the South China Sea has a critical role in China's trade and energy consumption. China's wealthy coastal areas, which are China's trade and production centres, are very vulnerable to attacks that may be conducted from Taiwan. Taking into account the relations between the US and Taiwan, the main threat for China is that the US may use Taiwan as a base during a possible operation against China. It will be difficult for China to detect and take necessary measures against an attack which will be conducted from Taiwan. From this point, seizing Taiwan will increase China's security and reduce the power projection of the United States. In addition, Taiwan may act as a buffer during a possible attack on mainland China, and China can take necessary measures by detecting possible attacks earlier with the early warning systems and radars that it will deploy in Taiwan.

Seizing control of Taiwan will also increase China's military projection in the Asia-Pacific region. As emphasized in the fourth chapter of the thesis, China wants to aim to increase its power projection in the first island chain and also aims to expand its capacity to the second island chain so as to augment its security and compete with the US Navy. Taiwan is a geographically important point for China to be the dominant power in the first island chain. If Taiwan is controlled by China, China will be able to move its navy more safely in the region. The range of motion of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) will increase in both the East China Sea and the South China Sea because Taiwan is located in the middle of these two seas.

States need a strong navy and supply points in order to move their forces to other geographies and protect their maritime trade from a possible attack. All these are important to protect the overseas interests of states. According to official statements by China, one of the aims of its military modernization is to protect its overseas interests and increase its overseas operation capacity (SCIO, 2010; 2019a). China has continued to modernize and strengthen its land armies. PLAN has become the largest

navy in the world in terms of quantity (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2021). Like the US, China also needs overseas bases and safe maritime routes in order to expand its power to other geographies of the world. If China controls new overseas bases, islands and ports in the Asia-Pacific region, China's security and dominance will increase in the region. When China's South China Sea policies are examined from this perspective, it is seen that it has similar aims to its Taiwan policy. China is turning the South China Sea islands, whose sovereignty rights are controversial, into military bases with its unilateral aggressive policies in order to augment its coastal, commercial and energy security. In addition, these islands serve as supply points and watchtowers on the Indian Ocean for China's army. Thanks to these supply points, the power projection of the PLA will increase, and China will gain the capacity to operate in more distant geographies. In this way, China will gain the capacity to intervene in distant regions and protect its overseas interests, which it desires.

In this respect, it is clearly seen that China's Taiwan and the South China Sea policies, military and naval modernization plans and -as it will be discussed later- the Belt and Road Initiative policy serve similar strategic purposes. When its continuing rapid economic growth, comprehensive military modernization plan, increasing military technologies, strengthening military presence in the Asia-Pacific region, unilateral South China Sea policies, and most importantly, the possible benefits for China from its seizure of Taiwan are taken into account, it is seen that China's Taiwan policy serves the purpose of being hegemon.

The third proof that the policies pursued by rising China serve its purpose of hegemony is the possible consequences of the Belt and Road Initiative. The BRI is one of China's most important foreign policy moves, involving major infrastructure and energy investments worldwide, serving many strategic and security purposes for China.

First of all, the initiative aims to connect China with all over the world by rail, highways, pipelines, and ports. In this case, China will be able to export its products

in a cheaper, faster, and safer way; and it will be able to provide raw material and energy needs more reliably and quickly. Many infrastructure projects under BRI are carried out by Chinese companies and necessary raw materials for these constructions are imported from China. In addition, some ports that are built under the BRI are also managed by Chinese companies. These projects aim to make China the centre of world trade and increase the demand for Chinese goods. In this respect, the first aim of the initiative is to maintain China's rapid economic growth. If the initiative succeeds, China will have more resources to allocate to its military modernization and become closer to being the single great power in the Asia-Pacific region.

BRI also serves to increase China's trade security. Within the scope of the BRI, railways and roads surrounding the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe will reduce China's dependence on maritime trade. In this case, China will be able to continue its access to the resources it needs and continue to sell its products to the other states during a possible naval blockade.

In addition, many energy infrastructure projects are carried out within the scope of BRI. China is the largest oil importer and energy consumer in the world (Djankov, 2016). In this context, an estimated 80 per cent of its energy supplies are transported by sea through the Malacca Strait, which is controlled by the United States Navy (Ghiasi & Zhou, 2017). With pipelines built under the BRI, China aims to increase energy security by creating alternative energy routes.

In addition, China provides large loans to participating countries within the scope of BRI projects. This situation creates a unilateral dependency between China and BRI participating countries and increases China's influence on these countries. China will be able to use this situation to create political, economic, and diplomatic pressure on the BRI participating countries. In this way, China will have the power to influence the behaviour and political outputs of governments of these states. It can also use this power to reduce the US' effects on these states. In this respect, some countries are trying to avoid the debt spiral by stopping projects. However, some BRI participating

countries, such as Sri Lanka, transfer the facilities built within the scope of the initiative to Chinese companies in return for their debts and are forced to accept new project agreements. In this case, China both obtains overseas ports in these regions and increases its influence on countries. This situation is called the debt trap in the literature.

Although China has not started to use these ports militarily, there are some signals that it wants to use the ports for military purposes. China acquired the right to use the Sri Lankan Hambantota port, which is a strategically important, for 99 years. As declared by Sri Lankan officials, China has been negotiating the island's strategic and intelligence possibilities from the beginning of the project (Abi-Habib, 2018a).

In addition, the expansion project of the strategically important Pakistan Gwadar port is being carried out and managed by a Chinese company. Pakistan is having difficulty repaying its debts to Chinese companies even now (Abi-Habib, 2018b). At this point, China is likely to pressure Pakistan to gain military access to the port of Gwadar, a deep port where submarines, aircraft carriers (Cai, 2017), and other largest vessels can be deployed (Kardon, 2020).

Gwadar port is not the only example of this situation. Chinese companies also continue to construct many ports around the Indian Ocean in Malaysia, Bangladesh and many more countries under the BRI. These ports have not only critical importance for China's coastal security, energy security, and trade security of China, but also its military projection.

According to the findings of the thesis, the BRI serves the purpose of China being a regional hegemony in many respects. If the initiative is successful, China's economic growth, which is the root of its military growth, will be supported. Chinese products will be sold to the whole world much cheaper and faster. Chinese companies will operate many strategic facilities in different parts of the world and China will meet its energy needs cheaper and safer. In addition, China's trade, energy, and coastal

security will be supported, and China's regional and global influence will increase. If China gains the right to use the BRI ports militarily, its power projection will increase, and the superiority of the US in the Indian Ocean and Western Pacific Ocean will decrease. In this respect, the Belt and Road Initiative aims to shift the balance of power in the Asia-Pacific region in favour of China.

To sum up, trying to take control of Taiwan, arming the South China Sea Islands and questing to acquire overseas bases in other countries under the Belt and Road Initiative also indicate that China wants to increase its military presence in the Asia-Pacific region. China is also trying to create alternative energy and commercial transport routes under the scope of the Belt and Road Initiative. Considering the military superiority of the US in the seas, its military bases surrounding the Pacific and Indian Ocean, and its increasing military presence in the region, it is possible to say that these policies also aim to increase the security of China. Its control of Taiwan, acquisition of new military bases in other countries within the scope of BRI, and the construction of military facilities on the islands in the South China Sea, which is one of the important transition points of world trade, will increase China's energy, trade, and coastal security.

In light of all these findings, the following conclusion was reached: China's Taiwan policy and BRI serve the purpose of China's hegemony. According argues by offensive structural realists, fear and uncertainty in the international system also push China to be prepared for the worst-case scenario. China considers the US as the main threat to its economic rise and developmental interests, so it follows many policies to ensure its security, increase its power in the region and reduce the power of the US in the region.

As indicated in *Figure 6.1.*, the economic rise of China is increasing its military and latent power, so the balance of power in the Asia Pacific region has started to change in China's favour. China is using its increasing economic, political, and military power to pursue more aggressive policies. If these policies are successful, China's

economic and military power will increase even more. In this case, China, which will become stronger, will come closer to being a regional hegemon.

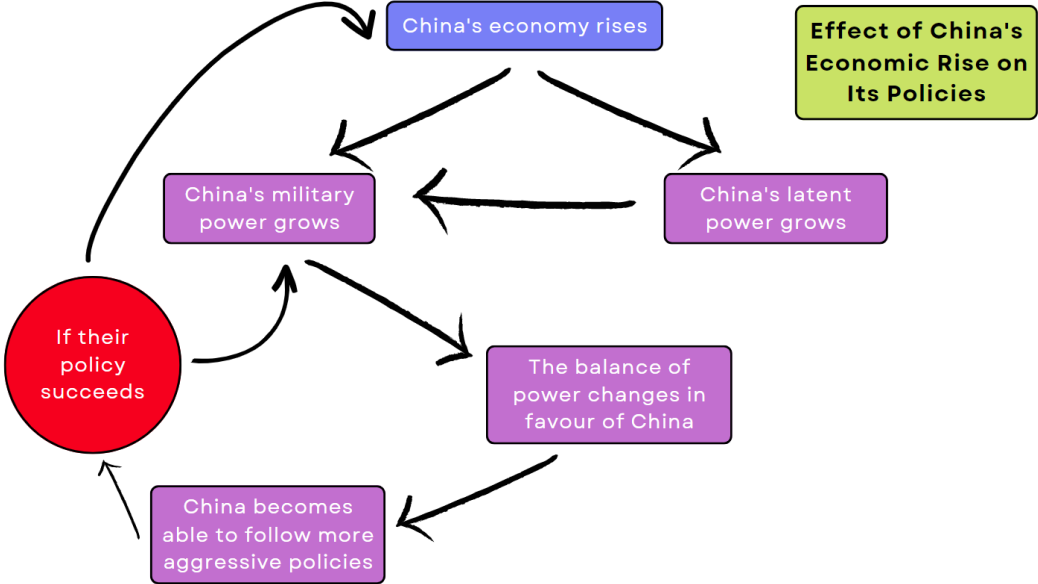


Figure 6. 1: Effect of China’s Economic Rise on Its Policies

The beginning of this vicious circle is China's economic rise. Offensive structural realists argue that concerns about China's rise will be significantly reduced if China's economic growth slows down. However, the Chinese economy continues to grow rapidly. According to the findings of the thesis, China uses its increasing economic power to increase its security and military power. As a result, it is concluded that the arguments of offensive structural realists about the rise of China are correct. Rising China wants to become a regional hegemon in its region in order to be the safest state in the region. Its Belt and Road Initiatives and Taiwan policy are serving this objective.

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Çin'in yükselişi günümüz uluslararası ilişkilerini en meşgul eden konulardan biridir. Ekonomik dönüşüm sürecinden önce yoksul bir ülke olan Çin, günümüzde dünyanın en büyük ikinci ekonomisi haline gelmiştir. Kırk yıla aşkın süredir devam eden hızlı ekonomik büyümesinin devam etmesi durumunda Çin'in dünyanın en büyük ekonomisi haline geleceği tahmin edilmektedir. Çin'in dikkate değer büyümesi pek çok sosyal bilim ve araştırma sahasının dikkatini çektiği gibi Uluslararası İlişkilerin de dikkatini çekmektedir. Bu kapsamda pek çok uluslararası ilişkiler teorisi Çin'in yükselişini farklı açılardan incelemektedir. Ofansif yapısal realizm muhtemelen bu teoriler içerisinde en karamsar olanıdır.

Ofansif yapısal realizm köklerini klasik realizm ve yapısal realizmden alan, sistemsel düzeyde inceleme yapan bir teoridir. Defansif yapısal realizm gibi ofansif yapısal realizm de anarşik uluslararası sisteme ve bu sistemin devletler için belirlediği davranış kalıplarına odaklanır. Uluslararası sistemde devletlerin arasındaki ilişkiyi düzenleyen bir üst otorite bulunmadığına dikkat çeken ofansif yapısal realistler bu durumun devletler arasında bitmez tükenmez bir güvensizliğe, korkuya ve çatışmaya neden olduğunu iddia etmektedirler.

Ofansif yapısal realistlere göre devletlerin her birinin birbirlerine zarar verme kapasitesi vardır. Bu güç geleceğin bilinmezliği ve uluslararası ilişkilerde üst bir otoritenin bulunmaması sebebiyle diğer devletler için birer tehdittir. Devletler birbirlerinden esas güçlerini gizlemeye ve birbirlerini kandırmaya meyillidir. Uluslararası sistemde ilk amaçları yaşamak olan devletlerin yaşama olasılıklarını

artırmak için güçlerini artırmaları gerekmektedir. Devletler bu acımasız sistemde her zaman olası bir saldırıya hazırlıklı olmalıdır. Ofansif yapısal realistler bir devletin kendinden daha güçlü olduğunu düşündüğü bir devlete saldırmayacağını iddia etmektedirler. Bu sebeple ofansif yapısal realistlere göre sistemde en güvende olan devlet en güçlü olan devlet, yani hegemondur. Bu sebeple tüm devletler özünde hegemon olmak, yani sistemdeki tek süper güç olmak istemektedirler.

Her devlet hegemon olmak istese de sadece gücü yeten devletler hegemonya arayışına girebilirler çünkü devletlerin hareket alanlarını ve izleyebilecekleri politikaları güç dengesi içindeki konumları belirlemektedir. Bu sebeple güç dengesinin bir süper güç lehine değişmesi onu agresif ve tek taraflı politikalar izlemeye itecektir. Devletler için en temel arzu hayatta kalmak, bunun tek yoluysa en güçlü olmaktır. Bu sebeple ofansif yapısal realizme göre devletler ellerine güçlerini artırma fırsatı geçtiği zaman bunu asla geri çevirmezler. Tüm bu davranış kalıpları devletlere sistem tarafından dikte edilir. Devletlerin iç siyasetleri ve sosyolojileri bu süreçte etkili olmaz.

Ofansif yapısal realizmin kurucularından olan Mearsheimer gücü askeri güç ve gizli güç olmak üzere ikiye ayırır ve gizli güce askeri güce çevrilebilirliği ölçüsünde değer verir. Gizli güç ekonomi, teknoloji, nüfus, sanayi ve benzeri öğelerden oluşur. Bu öğeler temel olarak devletler için güçlü bir orduya sahip olmanın da ön koşulunu oluşturur. Ekonomik olarak zayıf ve nüfus olarak yetersiz bir ülkenin güçlü bir orduya sahip olabilme olasılığı bir hayli azdır. Ancak Mearsheimer'a göre gücün ana unsuru askeri güçtür çünkü ülkeler askerlerle ele geçirilmektedir ve askerlerle yok edilmektedir. Bu sebeple ülkeler kendilerini korumak için askeri güce sahip olmalıdır.

Çin 1978 yılında ekonomik sürecine girmeden önce ne güçlü bir orduya ne güçlü bir sanayiye ne de güçlü bir ekonomiye sahipti. Süregelen ekonomik sisteminin verimsizliği sebebiyle Çin ekonomik gelişmişlik açısından potansiyelinin bir hayli altında performans göstermekteydi. 1980'lerle birlikte dış dünyaya açılmaya

başlayan Çin, devlet güdümlü bir market ekonomisi haline gelmiştir. Dünya Bankası verilerine göre Çin bu süreçte kişi başına düşen milli gelirini 156 Amerikan dolarından 12,566 Amerikan dolarına çıkartmıştır. Gayri safi yurtiçi hasılası 149 milyar dolardan 17,73 trilyon dolara çıkan Çin, dünyanın en güçlü ikinci ekonomisi haline gelmiştir. Ofansif yapısal realistler tam olarak da bu sebeplerden dolayı Çin'in bölgesindeki diğer devletleri domine ederek hegemon olmaya çalışacağını iddia etmektedir. Ofansif yapısal realistler için Çin'in mevcut uluslararası sisteme tehdit olarak algılanmasının sebebi onun kapasitesindeki bu artıştır. Buradaki tehdit Çin değildir; sistemde yeni bir aktörün güç kazanıyor olmasıdır. Eğer ofansif yapısal realistlerin iddiaları doğruysa dünyanın en güçlü ekonomisi olmaya aday olan Çin'in güç dengesini kendi lehine çevirerek hegemon olmaya çalışması gerekmektedir.

Ofansif yapısal realistlere göre gücün ana unsuru askeri güçtür. Ekonomik güç ise askeri gücün temel birleşenlerinden biridir. Çin'in askeri harcamaları incelendiği zaman ekonomik dönüşüm sürecinden günümüze ciddi bir artış fark edilmektedir. Stockholm Uluslararası Barış Araştırmaları Enstitüsü'ne göre Çin'in askeri harcamaları 27 yıldır aralıksız artmaktadır. 1989 yılında 11 milyar dolar olan Çin'in askeri harcamaları 2021 yılına gelindiğinde 293 milyar dolara çıkmıştır. 2000 yılında askeri harcaması Japonya'nın askeri harcamalarının yarısı kadar olan Çin, günümüzde tek başına neredeyse tüm Asya devletleri kadar askeri harcama yapmaktadır.

Bunun yanı sıra Çin'in güvenlik kâğıtlarında da detaylıca açıkladığı geniş bir askeri modernizasyon planı mevcuttur. Kendini yeni nesil savaşa hazırlıksız olarak gören Çin, bu konuda detaylı bir eylem planına sahiptir. Bu plan kapsamında Çin Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu personel yapısı ve doktrinlerini güncellemeye, ordusunu daha eğitilmiş ve profesyonel hale getirmeye, askeri hazırlık ve muharebe kabiliyetini artırmaya odaklanmaktadır. Ordusuna yeni savaş gemileri ekleyen Çin şimdiden dünyanın miktar bakımından en büyük donanmasına sahip hale gelmiştir. Hava kuvvetlerini de süratle modernize eden Çin, bugün dünyanın en büyük üçüncü hava kuvvetleri envanterine sahiptir. Tüm bunların yanı sıra otonom sistemler, kuantum

teknolojileri, yapay zekâ, erken uyarı sistemi, gerçek zamanlı izleme, uydu savar silahlar ve benzeri gelişmiş askeri teknolojilere yatırım yapan Çin her geçen gün askeri gücünü artırmakta ve daha güçlü bir orduya sahip olmaktadır.

Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti Devlet Konseyi Bilgi Bürosu'nun yayınlamış olduğu güvenlik kâğıtlarına göre Komünist Parti, Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti'nin kuruluşunun yüzüncü yılı olan 2049'u güçlü ve varlıklı bir devlet olarak kutlamak istemektedir. Bu hayali *Çin Rüyası* olarak adlandıran parti, güçlü bir orduya sahip olmayı *Çin Rüyasının* bir gerekliliği olarak görmektedir. Güçlü bir orduya sahip olmadan güçlü ve güvenli bir ülke olamayacağını vurgulayan Çin, 2035 yılına kadar ordu modernizasyonunu tamamlamayı planlamaktadır. Modernizasyonunun temel amacının güvenliğini artırmak ve gelişimini korumak olduğunu savunan Çin, bu gücü asla diğer ulusları tahakküm altına almak için kullanmayacağını vurgulamaktadır.

Ancak savunma araçları doğaları gereği aynı zamanda saldırı araçlarıdır. Güvenlik amacıyla edinilen askeri araçlar saldırı amacıyla da kullanılabilirler. Realiteye bakıldığı zaman Çin'in çok kısa bir sürede tüm komşularının toplamından daha fazla askeri harcama yapar hale geldiği görülmektedir. Bu sebeple de Çin'in askeri gelişimi komşuları tarafından tehdit olarak algılanmaktadır. Artan ileri teknolojisi ve nükleer caydırıcılığıyla Çin, gitgide dış tehditlere karşı daha caydırıcı hale gelmektedir. Aynı zamanda bu Çin'in olası bir politik anlaşmazlıkta güç kullanmaya daha istekli olacağı anlamına gelmektedir.

Bu gerçeklikler ofansif yapısal realistlerin devletlerin ekonomik olarak güçlenmesinin askeri güçlenmelerine sebep olacağı iddialarıyla örtüşmektedir. Görüldüğü üzere ekonomik olarak hızlı bir şekilde gelişen Çin, askeri olarak da gelişmektedir. Çin ekonomik büyümesi devam ettiği sürece askeriye daha fazla kaynak ayırabilecektir. Böylece beyaz kitaplarında belirttiği dünya devletleri seviyesinde ordu kurma hedefine ulaşabilecektir.

Çin artan ekonomik gücünü açık bir şekilde daha fazla askeri güç kazanmak için kullanmaktadır. Çin'in geliştirdiği teknolojiler ve envanterine eklediği yeni silahlar, savaş uçakları ve gemiler temel olarak bölgede kendi gücünü artırmasına hizmet ederken, Asya-Pasifik bölgesinde halen başat güç olan Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin gücünü azaltmayı amaçlamaktadır. Özellikle geliştirdiği Erişim Engelleme/Alan Engelleme (A2/AD) stratejisi ve nükleer caydırıcılık kapasitesi direkt olarak olası bir çatışmada Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin bölgeye müdahalesini engellemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Çin'in Asya-Pasifik bölgesinde hegemon olmasının ana engeli bölgede başat güç olan Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin varlığıdır. Gerek askeri üstünlüğü gerek bölgedeki askeri üstleri gerekse bölgede pek çok müttefike sahip olmasıyla Amerika Birleşik Devletleri Çin'in güvenliğini tehdit eden esas unsur olarak görülmektedir. Bu sebeptendir ki Çin, bölgede baskın güç olabilmek için askeri olarak Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'yle rekabet edebilecek teknolojiler geliştirmeye, yeni teknolojik silahlar edinmeye ve Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin bölgeye erişimini engelleyecek stratejiler geliştirmeye odaklanmaktadır. Çin'in askeri gücü arttıkça bölge devletleri üzerindeki baskısı artmaya ve Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin bölge üzerindeki etkisi azalmaya devam edecektir. Bu çerçevede Çin'in hegemon olmayı hedeflemese bile askeri modernizasyon planının başarılı olması durumunda hegemon olmaya daha da yaklaşacaktır.

Ofansif yapısal realistler her güçlenen devletin güç dengesini lehine değiştirmeye çalışacağını ve yeterli güce eriştiği zaman bölgesel hegemon olmayı deneyeceğini iddia etmektedir. Bu iddialar elbette ki tarihsel bulgulara ve teorik bir temele dayanmaktadır. Lakin bu durumun Çin için de geçerli olduğunu ispat etmek için Çin dış politikasının analiz edilmesi gerekmektedir. Eğer ki yükselen Çin'in dış politikası hegemonya kurma amacına hizmet etmiyorsa Çin'in ekonomik ve askeri olarak yükseldiği için hegemonya kurma amacında olduğunu iddia edemeyiz. Bu kapsamda, tezde incelenmek üzere Tayvan sorunu ve Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi seçilmiştir.

Tayvan sorunu İkinci Dünya Savaşı'ndan günümüze süre gelen, zaman zaman sıcak çatışmalara sebep olan tartışmalı bir husustur. İkinci Dünya Savaşı'ndan sonra devam eden Çin İç Savaşı Çin Komünist Partisi'nin kazanmasıyla sonuçlanmış Çin Milliyetçi Partisi ise kontrol altında tuttuğu Tayvan adasına çekilmiştir. Her ne kadar zaman zaman Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti bu bölgeyi ele geçirmeye çalışsa da Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin soruna dahil olmasıyla bu amacını gerçekleştirememiştir.

Çin'in askeri olarak gelişmesiyle Tayvan ve Çin arasındaki güç asimetrisi hızlı bir şekilde artmaya başlamıştır. Tayvan'ın beyaz kitapları incelendiğinde Çin'i kendi güvenliğine karşı temel tehdit olarak kabul ettikleri dikkati çekmektedir. Mevcut güç asimetrisi nedeniyle Tayvan güvenliği açısından Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'ne tek taraflı olarak bağımlıyken, Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti için Tayvan günümüzde doğrudan bir güvenlik tehdidi oluşturmamaktadır.

Ekonomik yükselişiyle birlikte askeri olarak da güçlenen Çin'in Tayvan'a karşı tutumu gittikçe sertleşmektedir. Yakın zamanda Çin'in Tayvan üzerindeki askeri, politik ve diplomatik baskısının gittikçe arttığı görülmüştür. 2020 Tayvan devlet başkanlığı seçimini 1992 Mutabakatına karşı olduğu bilinen Demokratik İlerleme Partisi Başkanı Tsai Ing-wen'in kazanmasıyla beraber artan gerginlik dönemin Amerika Birleşik Devletleri Temsilciler Meclisi başkanı Nancy Pelosi'nin Tayvan ziyaretiyle birlikte iyice artmıştır. Tepki olarak bölgede askeri tatbikatlar yapan ve Tayvan'ın hava savunma teşhis bölgesini defaatle ihlal eden Çin'e karşı Amerika Birleşik Devletleri iki savaş gemisini Tayvan Boğazına göndermiştir. Süregelen bu askeri gerginliklerin dışında Çin, Tayvan'ın uluslararası alanda devletler tarafından tanınmasını ve Tayvan'ın uluslararası örgütlere katılımını engellemeye çalışmaktadır.

Çin güvenlik kitapları ve resmî açıklamalarında Tayvan'ı Çin'in bir parçası olarak gördüklerini, Tayvan'ın bağımsız bir devlet olmadığını ve Tayvan sorununun Çin'in iç meselesi olduğunu ısrarla vurgulamaktadır. Çin ana karası ve Tayvan'ın arasındaki tarihi bağa vurgu yapan Çin, Tayvan'ın Çin'e yeniden katılmasının her iki halkın da

iyiliğine olacağını iddia etmektedir ve Tayvan'ın bağımsızlığı durumunda güç kullanma opsiyonunu kullanacağını ısrarla vurgulamaktadır. Tayvan sorunu ve yeniden birleşme üzerine hazırlamış olduğu son güvenlik kağıdında Çin, güçlenmesiyle beraber Tayvan ile yeniden birleşme arzusunun yeni bir ivme kazanacağını ve güçlenen Çin'in Tayvan'ın Çin anakarasından ayrı bağımsız bir devlet olmasına asla izin vermeyeceğini ilan etmektedir. Tüm bu bulgular bize güçlenmesiyle birlikte Çin'in Tayvan politikasının gittikçe daha ofansif hale geldiğini göstermektedir.

Tayvan'ın güvenliği Tayvan'ın güvenlik kitapları da açıkça vurgulandığı üzere Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'ne bağlıdır. Çin ve Tayvan arasındaki krizlerde yaptığı askeri manevralarla Tayvan'ın işgal edilmesini engelleyen Amerika Birleşik Devletleri aynı zamanda hukuken devlet olarak tanımadığı Tayvan'a pek çok askeri ekipman, teknoloji ve silah satmaktadır. Ancak Çin gittikçe güçlenmektedir. Çin'in olası bir çatışmada Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin bölgeye erişimini engelleyebilmesi durumunda Tayvan kendisinden kat ve kat güçlü bir ordu ile savaşmak durumunda kalacaktır. Tayvan'ın asimetrik savaş stratejileri geliştirmesi ve buna uygun teknolojiler edinmesi bu durumun farkında olduklarının en büyük göstergesidir.

Tez kapsamında Çin'in Tayvan ile birleşmesinin Çin'e sağlayacağı olası katkılar incelenmiş ve Tayvan ile birleşmenin Çin'i bölgede hegemon devlet olmaya daha çok yaklaştıracığı bulunmuştur. Öncelikle Tayvan'ın nüfusu ve nispeten gelişmiş ekonomisi Tayvan ile yeniden birleşmesi durumunda Çin'in gizli gücünü artıracaktır. Bu durum ise yukarıda incelendiği üzere Çin'in askeri olarak gelişmesini destekleyecek ve Çin ordusu ile Asya-Pasifik bölgesindeki diğer devletlerin askeri güçleri arasındaki güç farkını gittikçe açacaktır.

Çin'in kıyı bölgeleri hem sanayisi hem de enerji ithalatı için kritik rol oynamaktadır. Bu bölgeler Çin'in üretim ve ticaret merkezleri olmalarına karşın Tayvan'dan gelecek olası bir saldırıya bir hayli açıktır. Tayvan'ın Amerika Birleşik Devletleri ile olan

yakın ilişkisi ve Amerika Birleşik Devletleri ve Çin arasındaki stratejik rekabet göz önüne alındığı zaman Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin Çin'le olası bir çatışmada Tayvan'ı askeri üst olarak kullanması muhtemeldir. Bunun yanı sıra Tayvan, Çin anakarasının güvenliği açısından kilit bir bölgedir. Çin bu bölgeye hâkim olması durumunda anakarasına yapılacak olan olası saldırıları daha önceden tespit etme ve daha erken karşılık verme fırsatı yakalayacaktır.

Çin'in Tayvan'ı kontrol etmesi durumunda Asya-Pasifik bölgesindeki askeri projeksiyonu da artacaktır. Çin, gücünü Japonya'nın güney kıyılarından başlayıp Malezya'ya kadar uzanan birinci ada zinciri üzerinde artırmak ve bu güç projeksiyonunu Kuzey Mariana Adaları, Guam ve Palau'yu kapsayan ikinci ada zincirine kadar genişleterek hem güvenliğini artırmak hem de Amerika Birleşik Devletleri Donanması ile rekabet edebilme kapasitesi kazanmak istemektedir. Tayvan jeopolitik konumu sebebiyle Çin'in birinci ada zincirinde egemen güç olması için kilit bir noktadır. Çin Tayvan'ı kontrol etmesi durumunda donanmasını bölgede daha rahat ve güvenli hareket ettirebilir hale gelecektir.

Sonuç olarak Tayvan sorununun Çin lehine çözülmesi Çin'i hem ekonomik hem de askeri olarak destekleyecektir. Çin'in Tayvan politikasıyla hegemon olma amacı gütmese bile politikasının başarıya ulaşması onu bölgesel hegemon olmaya daha da yaklaştıracaktır.

Tez kapsamında incelenen ikinci vaka Kuşak ve Yol Girişimidir. Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi ilk kez 2013 yılında duyurulan ve Asya ve Avrupa kıtalarını limanlar, yollar, tren yolları ve boru hatlarıyla birbirine bağlamayı amaçlayan devasa bir altyapı yatırımı projesidir. Zaman içinde girişimin kapsamı başka ülkelere ve coğrafyalara da yayılmıştır. Girişim temel olarak Avrasya bölgesindeki altyapı eksiklerini gidermeyi ve bölgedeki ekonomik iş birliğini artırmayı hedeflemektedir. Devlet ve uluslararası örgütleri kapsayan girişim 140'ın üzerinde katılımcıya sahiptir. Her ne kadar girişim kapsamında yapılacak olan projelerin kapsamlı bir listesi açıklanmamış

olsa da girişimin toplam maliyetinin 4 trilyon Amerikan doları büyüklüğünde olduğu tahmin edilmektedir.

Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi kapsamında yapılacak olan projeler yüksek yatırım maliyetleri gerektirdiği için Çin hükümeti projelere fon sağlamak amacıyla çok taraflı finansal kurumlar kurmuştur. Bu finansal kurumlar ve Çin Bankaları girişim kapsamında yapılan projeler için 70'i aşkın katılımcı ülkeye fon sağlamaktadır. Bu fonlar genel olarak ticari faiz oranları üzerinden sağlanmakta olup zaman zaman yüklenici ülkeler için büyük borç yüklerine neden olmaktadır.

Çin'in resmî açıklamalarına göre girişim ülkeler arasındaki ticareti, finansal entegrasyonu, çok taraflı işbirliğini, ülke toplumları arasındaki iletişimi, devletler arasındaki siyasi koordinasyonu, barışı ve karşılıklı güveni artırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Girişim pek çok dünya ülkesini kapsasa da girişim kapsamında yapıla alt yapı çalışmalarında esas olarak Çin merkeze alınmaktadır ve proje kapsamında yapılan ticaret ve altyapı hatları Çin'de başlamaktadır ve Çin'de bitmektedir. Bu açıdan girişim pek çok katılımcı ülkeye altyapı gelişimleri açısından katkı sağlamayı vaat etse de ağırlıklı olarak Çin'in ekonomisine ve güvenliğine hizmet etmektedir.

Stratejik açıdan değerlendirildiği zaman Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi'nin Çin'i dünya ticaretinin ve ekonomisinin merkezi haline getirmeyi hedeflediği görülmektedir. Girişim kapsamında hayata geçirilen projeler sonucunda Çin ürünleri dünyanın çeşitli bölgelerine daha hızlı, güvenli ve ucuz şekilde taşınabilecektir. Aynı zamanda Çin ihtiyacı olan hammaddelere daha kolay ulaşabilecektir. Bu durum Çin'in ucuz işgücü avantajı sayesinde ucuza imal ettiği ürünleri daha ucuza imal etmesini sağlayacaktır ve katılımcı ülkeler için Çin malı ürünlerle rekabet etmek daha da zorlaşacaktır. Tüm bunlar Çin'in 2012 yılıyla birlikte yavaşlamaya başlayan ekonomik büyüme ivmesini devam ettirmesine yardımcı olarak askeri modernizasyonu için daha fazla kaynak aktarmasını sağlayacaktır. Ayrıca gelişen ekonomisi, ticari üstünlüğü ve katılımcı ülkelere verdiği fonlar sayesinde Çin'in siyasi gücü de artacaktır. Çin projeler

kapsamında verdiđi kredilerle katılımcı lkelerin zerinde politik baskı kurma gcne sahip olacaktır.

Giriřim kapsamında yapılan projeler in'deki inřaat ve inřaatla alakalı ekipman imalatıları iin yeni yatırım fırsatları yaratmaktadır. Bu kapsamda in'in hesaplarına gre katılımcı lkeler in'den aldıkları kredileri gene inli řirketlerden hizmet ve ekipman almak iin kullanacaklardır. Bu kapsamda in'in Kuřak ve Yol Giriřimi ile inřaat endstrinin yurt dıřında bymesini sađlamayı ve in'in imento, elik ve inřaat sektrndeki ařırı kapasitesini artı deđere evirmeyi hedeflemektedir. Tm bunların in ekonomisine katkı sađlayacađı ařıkrdır.

Projeler ayrıca katılımcı lkelerin in'e olan bađımlılıđını da artırmaktadır. in'in verdiđi krediler devletlerin zerinde yk oluřturduka bu bađımlılık daha da artmaktadır ve lkeler bor sarmalına dřme riski yařamaktadır. Bu durumlar sebebiyle Kuřak ve Yol Giriřimi projeleri hem in'in bu lkeler zerindeki etkisini artırmakta hem de Amerika Birleřik Devletleri'nin bazı katılımcı lkeler zerindeki etkisini azaltmaktadır.

Kuřak ve Yol Giriřimi sadece in ekonomisini gclendirmeyi deđil aynı zamanda in'in enerji, ticaret ve kıyı gvenliđini ve in ordusunun hareket kabiliyetini artırmayı amalamaktadır. Blgede Amerika Birleřik Devletleri bařat gtr. stn askeri teknolojileri, tm blgeyi saran deniz ařırı askeri stleri ve blgedeki nemli bođazları tutması sebebiyle Amerika Birleřik Devletleri in'in gvenliđi iin tehdit oluřturmaktadır. in dnyanın en byk enerji tketicisidir ve enerji ihtiyacının yzde 85'ini ithal etmektedir. Bu ithalatın yzde 80'i Amerika Birleřik Devletleri donanması tarafından kontrol edilen Malakka Bođazı'ndan gemektedir. Bunun yanı sıra in'in diđer lkelerle gerekleřtirdiđi ticaretin nemli bir blm de deniz tařımacılıđıyla gerekleřtirmektedir. Amerika Birleřik Devletleri olası bir savař veya atıřmada hem enerji hem de ticaret aısından deniz tařımacılıđına bađımlı olan in'in deniz ticaret akıřını keserek in'i byk zararlara uđratabilir. Ancak Kuřak ve Yol Giriřimi'nin bařarılı olması durumunda in alternatif ticaret yollarına ve

enerji tedarik hatlarına sahip olacaktır. Bu sayede Çin olası krizlerde daha iddialı politikalar izleyebilecektir.

Çin-Pakistan Ekonomik Koridoru girişimin en önemli projelerinden biridir. Bu proje kapsamında Çin, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri donanması tarafından kontrol edilen Malakka boğazını kullanmadan Pakistan üzerinden Orta Doğu bölgesindeki enerji kaynaklarına ulaşabilecektir. Bu koridor kapsamında yapılacak projelerle Çin petrole daha güvenli ve daha hızlı ulaşabilecektir.

Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi sadece kara projelerinden oluşan bir proje değildir. Girişim kapsamında Sri Lanka, Bangladeş, Malezya ve benzeri pek çok stratejik noktaya limanlar inşa edilmektedir. He ne kadar Çinli yetkililer bu limanları askeri amaçlarla kullanılmasının söz konusu olmadığını vurgulasalar da pek çok analist bu taahhüde şüpheyle yaklaşmaktadır. Sri Lanka Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi kapsamında yapılan projeler için kullandığı kredilerin borçlarını ödeyememiş ve bu sebeple Hambantota limanını 99 yıllığına Çin'e devretmek durumunda kalmıştı. Gwadar limanı ise hali hazırda Çinli şirketler tarafından genişletilmekte ve işletilmektedir. Limanın derin liman olma özelliği, jeostratejik önemi ve Pakistan'ın şimdiden Çin'den aldığı kredileri ödemekte zorluk çektiği hesaba katıldığı zaman Çin'in limanı askeri olarak kullanma izni almak için Pakistan'a baskı yapması olasılığı her zaman mevcuttur. Çin beyaz kitaplarında askeri modernizasyonunun bir hedefinin de deniz aşırı çıkarlarını korumak ve deniz aşırı operasyon kapasitesini artırmak olduğunu açıklamıştır. Bu doğrultuda donanmasını modernize eden Çin'in donanmasının hareket mesafesini artırabilmek için deniz aşırı askeri üstlere ihtiyacı vardır.

Çin ayrıca egemenlik hakları tartışmalı olan Güney Çin Denizi adalarını tek taraflı bir biçimde silahlandırmaktadır. Bu bölgedeki ada ve adacıkları kum doldurarak birbirine bağlayan ve oluşturduğu yapay adaları askeri üstlere çeviren Çin, hem kıyı, ticaret ve enerji güvenliğini artmakta hem de askeri projeksiyon kapasitesini artırmaktadır. Çin'in bu politikası Tayvan politikası ve Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi hedefleriyle pek çok noktada örtüşmektedir. Bu politikalar göstermektedir ki Çin

sadece güvenliğini artırmayı değil, aynı zamanda Asya-Pasifik bölgesindeki askeri varlığını artırmayı ve deniz aşırı operasyon kapasitesini geliştirmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Ofansif yapısal realizme göre uluslararası sistemdeki korku ve belirsizlik devletleri en kötü senaryoya karşı hazırlıklı olmaya itmektir. Çin, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'ni ekonomik yükselişi ve kalkınma çıkarları için ana tehdit olarak görmektedir. Bu nedenle güvenliğini sağlamak, bölgedeki gücünü artırmak ve Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin bölgedeki gücünü azaltmak için birçok politika izlemektedir.

Ekonomik yükselişiyle beraber Asya-Pasifik bölgesindeki güç dengesi Çin lehine değişmeye başlamıştır. Çin bahsedildiği üzere artan gücünü daha iddialı ve kendine güvenen politikalar izlemek için kullanmaktadır. Tüm bu hususlar göz önünde bulundurulduğu zaman şu açıktır ki Tayvan politikasının ve Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi'nin başarılı olması durumunda Çin hegemon olmaya daha da yaklaşacak, belki de bölgesel bir hegemon olacaktır.

Tüm bu bulgular göstermektedir ki ofansif yapısal realistlerin yükselen devletler için iddia ettiği argümanlar yükselen Çin için de geçerlidir. Ekonomik dönüşüm sürecinden sonra iktisadi olarak güçlenen Çin kapsamlı bir askeri modernizasyon planı geliştirmiş ve ordusunu güçlendirmeye başlamıştır. Çin, iktisadi olarak geliştikçe askeri gelişimi için daha fazla para harcamaya ve gizli gücünü hızlı bir şekilde askeri güce çevirmeye başlamıştır. Bu durumda Asya-Pasifik bölgesinde daha güçlü bir aktör haline gelen Çin gücünü daha da fazla artırmak için daha ofansif politikalar izlemeye başlamıştır. Yükselen Çin, güvenliğini sağlayabilmek için bölgesel hegemon olmak istemektedir. Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi ve Tayvan politikası bu amaca hizmet etmektedir ve bunlardan elde edeceği sonuç Çin'in güç dengesi içerisinde gelecekteki konumunu tayin edecektir.

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