

CHINA THREAT THEORY: A CULTURAL INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE MASS MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE 19TH CONGRESS

*ÇİN TEHDİDİ TEORİSİ: 19. KONGRE İLE İLGİLİ KİTLE İLETİŞİM ARAÇLARINDA YAPILAN
HABERLERE KÜLTÜREL KURUMSALCI BİR BAKIŞ*

Hakan CAVLAK*

Mert ÇETİN**

Abstract


This study examines the skepticism of the Western societies towards China's growth which manifests itself on the Western mass media coverage of the Chinese Communist Party's 19th congress based on cultural-institutional approach. Cultural-institutional perspective of China Threat theory which is offering more appropriate arguments emphasizes China's non-democratic, authoritarian political system. It also examines the insecurity of China towards the Western hemisphere due to its historical experiences. It is argued that China did not leave the peaceful development policy after the 19th congress which has dominated China's foreign policy since 2003. Chinese policy towards North Korean Crisis has been chosen as the case for supporting the arguments of the study.


Keywords: Cultural-Institutionalism, Peaceful Development, Mass Media, 19th Congress, Chinese Foreign Policy, North Korean Crisis

Öz

Bu çalışmada Batılı toplumların Çin'in büyümesine yönelik şüphecilikleri Batı kitle iletişim araçlarında Çin Komünist Partisi'nin 19. Kongresi hakkında yapılan haberler üzerinden kültürel-kurumsalcı yaklaşımla incelenmiştir. Kültürel Kurumsalcı yaklaşım ayrıca Çin'in tarihsel deneyimlerinin bir sonucu olarak Batı yarımküre karşısında duyduğu güvensizliğin incelenmesini de sağlamaktadır. Çalışmada ayrıca Çin'in tarihi deneyimleri nedeniyle Batı yarımküreye karşı duyduğu güvensizlik de değerlendirilmiştir. Bu çalışmada Çin'in 19. Kongre sonrasında da 2003 yılından beri dış politikasının temelini oluşturan barışçı kalkınma politikasından vazgeçmediği iddia edilmektedir. Çin'in Kuzey Kore krizine yönelik politikası bu argümanı desteklemek üzere örnek olay olarak alınmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kültürel – Kurumsalcılık, Barışçıl Kalkınma, Kitle İletişim Araçları, 19. Kongre, Kuzey Kore Krizi, Çin Dış Politikası

*  Assoc. Prof. Dr., Tekirdağ Namık Kemal University, hakancavlak@gmail.com

**  Independent Researcher, Tekirdağ Namık Kemal University, mertcetintr@yahoo.com

GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Çalışmanın Amacı

Bu çalışmanın amacı Batılı toplumların Çin'in büyümesine yönelik şüpheciliklerini Batı kitle iletişim araçlarında Çin Komünist Partisi'nin 19. Kongresi hakkında yapılan haberler üzerinden kültürel-kurumsalcı yaklaşımla incelemektir. Ayrıca, Kültürel Kurumsalcı yaklaşım Çin'in tarihsel deneyimlerinin bir sonucu olarak Batı yarımküresinde karşılaştığı güvensizliğin incelenmesini de sağlamaktadır. Dolayısıyla bu çalışmada, çalışmanın temel amacına paralel olarak Çin'in tarihi deneyimleri nedeniyle Batı yarımküreye karşı duyduğu güvensizliğin anlaşılması da hedeflenmiştir.

Araştırma Soruları

Bu çalışmanın temel sorusu, "Batı, Çin'in büyümesine şüphecilikle mi bakmaktadır? Bu ana soruyu desteklemek amacıyla ikincil bir soru ise Kitle İletişim Araçları üzerinden ülkelerin diğer ülkelere bakışları analiz edilebilir mi?" şeklinde formüle edilmiştir. Araştırma, son olarak "Araştırma sorusunu cevaplayabilmek için kültürel – kurumsalcı bir yaklaşım uygun mudur?" sorusunu da içermektedir.

Hipotez

Bu çalışmada Çin'in 19. Kongre sonrasında da 2003 yılından beri dış politikasının temelini oluşturan barışçı kalkınma politikasından vazgeçmediği ve Batı'nın buna rağmen şüpheli yaklaşımından vazgeçmediği iddia edilmektedir.

Vaka

Çin'in Kuzey Kore krizine yönelik politikası ve Batı medyasının bu konudaki yaklaşımı bu argümanı desteklemek üzere örnek olay olarak alınmıştır.

Literatür Taraması

Bu çalışmada ortaya konulan problemi açıklamak üzere Kültürel Kurumsalcı yaklaşım kullanılmıştır. Bunun tercih edilmesinin nedenlerinden birincisi, uluslararası ilişkiler disiplinindeki paradigmaları doğrudan test edebiliyor olmasıdır. Klasik yaklaşımlar olan liberalizm ve realizm gibi uluslararası ilişkiler aktörlerinin siyasi eylemleri hakkında sistem seviyesinde analizler sağlayabilir. Konstrüktivizm ile benzerlikler gösterse de, kültürel kurumsalcılık daha geniş ve kapsamlı bir kuramsal çerçeve sağlamaktadır.

Yöntem

Bu çalışma nitel bir araştırma yöntemi ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Veri toplama ve değerlendirme yöntemi olarak doküman analizi kullanılmıştır. İddiaları somut dayanaklarla desteklemek için vaka çalışması yapılmıştır. Çalışmanın siyaset bilimi ve uluslararası ilişkiler disiplinlerine yaptığı katkıyı belirlemek için oldukça kapsamlı bir literatür taraması yapılmıştır.

Sonuç ve Değerlendirme

Çin Komünist Partisi'nin 19. Kongresi hakkında Batı medyasının abartılı ve doğru olmayan yayınları bu çalışmanın Batı'nın Çin ile ilgili bir güven problemi olduğu iddiasını doğrular niteliktedir. Bunun gerekçeleri Noam Chomsky ve Edward S. Herman'ın beş filtresi ile gösterilmiştir. Ayrıca, çalışma Çin'in Kore politikasının kendi söylemleri ile tutarlı olduğunu ve Batı medyasının bunu ya görmezden geldiğini ya da çarpıttığını ortaya koymaktadır.

INTRODUCTION

Since the reformation of its economy, average annual growth of China has been 9 percent and its total real GDP reached a value of 11.2 trillion US dollars in 2017. China's political and military potential is also increasing at the same rate. The rapid economic rise has provoked a significant interest in the problem of the transition of power between the existing hegemon and aspiring powers, which is labeled as the China Threat Theory. According to this theory, People's Republic of China is a rising power that triggers instability at both regional and international realms. The cultural-institutional approach of the China Threat Theory, which this study focuses on, emphasizes the unique characteristics of Chinese culture and political structure of China. The realist explanations that emphasize military and economic statistics are inadequate to comprehend the distrust between China and the Western world. Many of them are based on John Mearsheimer's works (Mearsheimer, 2004: 1-5). This study will particularly focus on China's unique historical experiences to explain why China has insecurity against the Western world. It will evaluate the distrust of the Western world and China.

China has reacted the skeptic approach named as "China Threat Theory" by the West with official policies of "peaceful rise" or "peaceful development" under the leadership of Hu Jintao. According to peaceful rise policy, China's rise is not a threat to peace and security. As China emerges as a great power, she will promote international order and contribute to harmony and stability both in home and abroad. Her priority is to ensure the welfare of her citizens and interfering in world affairs will come next (Bijian, 2005:1). Yet, the peaceful development policy was interpreted suspiciously by Western societies until recently. This skepticism has also manifested itself in the Western mass media's framing on the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. This study will explore the reasons for the Western mass media's exaggerated coverage of the Chinese Communist Party's 19th National Congress between 18 and 24 October 2017 in the light of cultural-institutional perspective of the China Threat Theory. Finally, as a case study, China's former and post-congress policies on the North Korean crisis will be examined to explore if there is a shift in Chinese foreign policy as claimed in the Western mass media.

1. THE IMPACT OF ITS PAST ON CHINA'S POLITICS

The cultural-institutional perspective of China Threat Theory emphasizes unique features of the Chinese society which are shaped by historical experiences. China has a narrative history which portrays Imperial China as benevolent, strong and more advanced than the Western world (Yu, 2014:1). The period of external interventions between the First Opium War and the communist revolution is portrayed as the Century of Humiliation (1839-1949). In the Chinese culture, the Century of Humiliation has an integral importance. These years constitute the core of the People's Republic of China's official ideology. In the Century of Humiliation, China was deprived of a central authority, became a semi-colonial country as a result its defeats against colonial Powers in the Opium Wars, Sino-French War and Sino-Japanese Wars (Scott, 2008:2-3). In the same period, China had to deal with many revolts which made country open external interventions. For instance, the Boxer Rebellion, which was a nationalist and anti-foreign riot, was suppressed by the Eight-Nation Alliance. The Eight Nation-Alliance consisted of Germany, Austro-Hungarian Empire, Russia, Italy, France, the United Kingdom, the United States and the Empire of Japan. The Boxer Rebellion was supported by the Qing government. The Qing army and Boxer riots fought against the Eight Nation-Alliance; however, they were defeated. At the end of the war, Beijing was occupied, foreign troops settled in the capital, several statesmen were executed and financial penalties were paid by the Qing government (Scott, 2008:143-150). This revolt has a great influence on the image of foreign countries in modern Chinese culture. The foreign powers, by taking advantage of China's backwardness, humiliated China. Republic of China does not want to fall into the same situation again and this motto is in the center of Chinese culture and Chinese nationalism.

One of the reasons that restrained the development of China were the events occurred during the so-called century of humiliation, i.e. exploitation of agricultural and mineral sources of China, which could be found in the agricultural and feudal state of Chinese economy prior to Revolution. The success of the communist revolution was the result of the ruthless policies of the Chinese Communist Party against the

landowners who allegedly cooperated with the imperialists during the century of humiliation. Through the revolutionary war, the Communist Party of China was reforming agricultural regions which it had taken over. These popular initiatives had caused it to gain support from peasants. The first job of the Communist Party was passing the 1950 Agrarian Reform Law to remove feudalism and nationalization of land. The Agrarian Reform Law left 40 percent of land being redistributed and 60 per cent of the Chinese population benefitted from it. It is estimated that 4.5 million landlords were persecuted or executed (Kerr, 2013:136-138).

The People Republic of China had to deal with global crisis during the Cold War. According to cultural-institutional perspective of China Threat Theory, People's Republic of China's attitude towards the Western world was also consolidated in this period. In the early 1950s, the United States assisted defeated Nationalist Party of China (The Kuomintang) in Taiwan, gave the permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council to Taiwan, organized mass media against the mainland China, imposed an economic embargo on mainland Chinese products, and managed an unconventional warfare. The mainland China's economic ties to the capitalist countries were cut off and had to turn to the Soviet Union. Although this is the period of respectable Sino-Russian relations, there was also distrust between Mao Zedong and the Soviet Union. There has never been a trust-related relationship between the Soviet Union and China. Even today, the Sino-Russian relations have serious disagreements. And the Eurasian alliance seems to be a difficult ideal to be reached (Kerr, 2013:138-139).

It was obvious that the limited resources of China, which was isolated from international trade, were also drained by military expenditures as a result of the Korean War. From 1952 to 1977, defense spending on average accounted for 5.5 percent of China's gross domestic product (So, 2015: 7). In this period, the struggle against the Western powers, led by the United States, on the Korean Peninsula had an important influence on the prosperity of the Chinese people.

The Cultural Revolution of Mao Zedong, which aimed to eliminate political rivals of Mao Zedong, also caused traumatic years between 1966 and 1976. The early years of the People's Republic of China passed with slight achievements and Mao was blaming party members who did not perceive the spirit of revolution. During the Cultural Revolution, crimes against humanity were committed. It revolved a great anarchy in China; the Red Guards attacked everything which was related to foreigners or belonged to the pre-revolutionary period. The Cultural Revolution ended when Mao passed away (Kraus, 2012:24-63).

The leading character of the China Miracle was Deng Xiaoping. He was the leader of the China from 1978 to 1992. Although a so-called miracle was emerged, rapid increase in population presented an integral threat to developments in economy and society. Due to improvements in health conditions and agriculture, there had been a population boom. In 1953, population of People's Republic of China was 594 million and reached 1 billion in 1982 (Peng, 2011:581-587). Deng Xiaoping observed that it was necessary to repair the damage quickly which was made by the Cultural Revolution and to improve the economy to feed growing population. He decided to conclude the isolation policy. It was a risky decision in contrast to the traditional approach of the Chinese society against foreigners. The Communist Party of China declared that the liberal economic reforms would be temporary to make the revolution succeed in order to ease possible critics.

Deng Xiaoping put into effect four modernizations of Zhou Enlai which aimed to develop industry, agriculture, national defense and science and technology. The Law on Chinese Foreign Equity Joint Ventures was introduced in 1979, small businesses were supported, economic zones were set up, foreign investments were encouraged, the factories of Western companies were established all over the country and allowed companies to determine their salary policies. The liberalization of the economy helped boost GDP growth from an annual average of 6% between 1953 and 1978 to 9.4% between 1978 and 2017, and urbanization increased considerably (World Economic Forum, 2015). In 2010, China became the world's second-largest economy leaving Japan behind. China is currently the world's largest market for cars and she is the biggest energy consumer. Estimates show that it will be the world's largest economy, passing the United States, between 2020 and 2030 (McCurry and Kollewe, 2011).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the field of international relations, scholars have become increasingly interested in norms of behavior, intersubjective understandings, culture, identity, and other social features of political life. However, as a result of disciplinary isolation, researchers usually abstained from choosing an unorthodox path to analyze political phenomena until relatively recent times. Scholars in international relations, like their counterparts in sociology, anthropology, history and international law discovered the impact of social or political institutions matter (Finnemore, 1996:325). Institutionalism, in general, is an attempt or an approach to understand social or political phenomena by evaluating the extent to which behaviors of an actor or political outcomes are affected by social or political institutions which surround them. Macro level institutions, such as political regime or culture, are valuable institutions in the field of political science especially in international politics for analyzing policy outcomes. Alongside with the macro level institutions, inter mediate level institutions, such as political norms, particular institutions within a state or conventional practices, are also very useful, especially in analyzing the differences between similarly conceived events (Thelen, 1999:379 – 380). In our case, a macro level institution, i.e. culture, has been chosen in order to be deployed in analyzing the international political outcomes of Chinese Revolution and in particular, 19th Congress and how are those outcomes perceived by the West through the glasses of its media.

Cultural institutionalism as an approach to understand international relations is valuable for several reasons. First, it tests leading paradigms in international relations straightly. It provides a system-level theoretic framework about political outcomes of international actors which can be compared with the ones produced by the classical approaches in IR such as realism or liberalism (Finnemore, 1996: 326). Second, although there are similarities with constructive approach in international relations, cultural institutionalism provides a much wider and more comprehensive theoretical framework than constructivism. Cultural institutionalism specifies the essential content of identity (Finnemore, 1996: 327). Constructivists basically argue that identity matters; however, cultural institutionalism elaborates on what the identity is. Moreover, cultural institutionalism integrates and interiorizes history rather than abstracting it from current phenomena. Mostly, the main aim of dominant approaches in IR, i.e. realism and liberalism, is to generate principles which can be generalized regardless of time. They generally tend to present what has not been changed by the time on a certain case or phenomena, e.g. the similarity between politics of Thucydides and Kissinger (Finnemore, 1996: 328). Conversely, institutionalists take historical change when they tend to make generalizations. They, in addition to other things, also focus on how states' goals, behaviors or policies are profoundly formed by culture, political ideas or social norms of a certain time in history. The case chosen in this study is also not an exception in this sense, both China's situation and its perception by the West are shaped by culture, social norms and political ideas.

China's rise has been questioned since the early 1990s in the Western Hemisphere both academically and politically. This questioning is called as the China Threat Theory. According to the China Threat Theory, People's Republic of China is a rising power which represents a source of regional and international instability. This theory is frequently voiced by scholars from China's bordering countries and western countries. Bell Gertz frames the People's Republic of China as the most serious national security threat to the United States at present and in the future in his book, *The China Threat*.

According to Herbert Yee and Ian Storey, there are several arguments of China Threat Theory, which are based on three different theoretical grounds: The historical approach, the Realist School and the cultural-institutional perspective. While some arguments can be fitted into a single theoretical framework, others can be fitted into more than one. For example, the emphasis on the nature of Chinese nationalism is more relevant to cultural-institutional perspective which has gained importance since 1980s (Yee and Story, 2013). The historical approach emphasizes only the events that are consequences of the policies implemented in China by the Global Powers. The classical realism is also known for its emphasis on human nature such as selfishness, greed and pursuit of power. Classical realism is related to the military and economical dimension of the China Threat Theory. As China gets stronger, she employs more power to protect her interests. China's rise has to be revisionist and source of instability due to natural reasons (Yee and Story, 2013). This

study argues that cultural-institutional perspectives are more consistent and have more explanatory power compared to other alternatives.

Cultural-institutional perspective on China Threat theory, which offers a more fitting argument, emphasizes China's non-democratic, authoritarian political system. In East Asia, China's neighbors experienced political reforms during the 1980s and 1990s. South Korea, Indonesia and Philippines took on a democratic structure. The end of the Cold War incorporated many single-party communist states to the Liberal-Capitalist camp all over the world. Despite its economic progression, China has not made considerable progress in the field of personal and political freedoms. Tiananmen Square incident had been an important reason of which afterwards used as an argument to justify China Threat Theory. Especially, in the public opinion of the United States, Beijing's overreaction against a pro-democracy movement received great criticism and increased the distrust of China.

In Western-oriented thought, democracy has always been considered as one of the main sources of the peace. According to democratic peace theory, democracies have never fought each other and the probability of war raises in a non-democratic country (Doyle, 1983:205-235). In this sense, People's Republic of China seems to be the biggest threat with its massive population and economy against Western hegemony. Furthermore, democracy is championed as a universal good and distinction between being good and being democratic is diminished in Western thought. There is a cultural-institutional difference between Chinese and Western societies. Making sense of the phenomena is the main source of insecurity between two societies. As People's Republic of China does not remove its single-party, authoritarian regime, it remains as a threat to international order for the Western democratic countries. If the Western societies continue to impose western-oriented democratic values on China, this will be perceived as an external intervention and increase insecurity of Chinese society because of the Chinese society's skeptical view of foreign interventions based on China's historical experiences.

The other assumption of cultural-institutional perspective of China Threat Theory is related to anti-western character of the Chinese nationalism. As mentioned earlier, China's history has many historical events related to foreign antagonism. The Boxer Rebellion, between 1899 and 1901, was a government-backed rebellion against foreigners and Westerners. The years that Chinese described as Century of Humiliation passed through foreign interventions and the struggles against these interventions. After the Communist revolution, there were many crises between the United States and China. According to Michael Sheng (1994), Mao ridiculed the United States as a paper tiger, an occupier of Taiwan, the enemy of the humanity, and a monopoly of capitalist groups (Kim and Yoo, 2016:43-45). Similarly, the image of Japan is not positive in China. In 2012, large scale anti-Japan protests erupted over disputed islands, Japanese restaurants were attacked, the police cars were set on fire due to being Japanese brands, and several Japanese nationals were assaulted. Because of these phenomena, China's rise is necessarily seen as a revisionist and source of instability according to cultural-institutional perspective of China Threat Theory.

The classical-realist perspective of China Threat Theory emphasizes military capacity of People's Republic of China. Beijing's annual military spending had been increased by 8.5% between 2007 and 2017. China tried to modernize its military capacity by acquiring foreign military technologies with mergers and acquisitions. Besides, China also tried to reach the technologies of the United States with illegal methods through traditional and cyber espionage according to 2017 Defense Department Report on Chinese Military Power of Pentagon. In August 2016, the United States Judiciary sentenced a citizen to 50 months imprisonment for conspiring with a Chinese national to violate the Arms Export Control Act by attempting to illegally purchase and export jet engines used in F-16, F-22, and F-35 fighter aircraft, the MQ-9 unmanned aerial vehicle, and related technical data (Chapman, 2017:1). The People's Liberation Army, official army of People's Republic of China, has the world's largest air missiles system. People's Liberating Army Rocket Force is also responsible for China's nuclear capacity, which has the world's fourth biggest nuclear arsenal (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2016). China's military capacity is alarming according to the classical realist perspective of China Threat Theory. Because China has many territorial disputes with its neighbor countries, its effort to increase military capacity can create instability in the region. On the Taiwan

issue, if there is a merger initiative by China, a global crisis may break out between the United States and China. In the South China Sea, China can also take steps to prevent international Sea Trade.

The emphasis on military and economic variables has always been superficial. People's Republic of China is not the only military and economically rising country. According to World Bank, , India, another nuclear power, has bigger military budget as a percentage of GDP than China. Also, India is one of the fastest-growing economies along with China. In 2017, India's economy grew by 7.4% percent while China grew by 6.5% (IMF, 2017). According to the United Nations, India will have overtaken China's population by 2022. In addition, India's nuclear weapon program was also based on espionage activities which were violating international law. Despite these facts, India is not seen as a threat in the Western media and academy. However, China is perceived as a greater threat. The classical-realist perspective is insufficient to elucidate the Western-oriented China Threat Theory. This distinction between China and India's reputation of the Western societies requests cultural-institutional approaches.

The term peaceful rise was put forward in response to the China Threat theory by Zheng Bijian, a well-known theorist of the Chinese Communist Party, in late 2003 to avoid the negative interpretation of the term 'rise'. Zheng Bijian used the term of peaceful rise during the Baoa Forum for Asia (BFA) against hegemonic stability concept, which argues that emergence of a new global power entails an international crisis because of the aggressive and expansionist behavior of the emerging power. Bijian said in his speech that China would never follow the same path, rise peaceably and stay away from disruptive behavior towards international peace. He also pointed out China's footmark on the path of reform and openness (Bijian, 2005). The term peaceful rise was used by Wen Jiabao in an ASEAN meeting, who was the President of the People's Republic of China. Yet, there were concerns about the use of 'rise' in China because of its negative image. The peaceful development term has been used in the official discourse of China since 2004.

Yet, the peaceful development policy was interpreted suspiciously until recently. At his election campaign Donald Trump, President of the United States, made it even clearer. The analogies, which he had used, to describe Chinese dominance over the United States' economy have received many criticisms. This skepticism has also manifested itself in the Western mass media's framing on the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China.

3. THE REPRESENTATION OF THE 19TH CONGRESS IN THE WESTERN MASS MEDIA

At the opening of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Xi Jinping stated that it was the time for his nation to become a mighty force that could lead the world on political, economic, military and environmental issues in his 3hr 23min speech to the delegates. This part of speech gave rise to questions about the future of peaceful rise. It ought to be said that such negative interpretations are preconceived and prejudicial. This speech was framed wrongly by Western mass media. The CNN gave the news about 19th party congress with the *Cult of Xi* subtitle and there were important statements such as "*the world will likely see China continue to step into a global leadership vacuum as the US turns inward under President Donald Trump.*" The Washington Post also framed the 19th congress with the titles of "*China's party congress is a wake-up call for the West*" and "*Xi Jinping just made it clear where China's foreign policy is headed.*"

This attitude of the Western mass media towards 19th congress reminds Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky's influential book, *Manufacturing Consent*. The *Manufacturing Consent* studied out the propaganda model which reveals that news from the so-called free Western mass media goes through five filters: the business interests of owner companies, advertising sensitivities, sourcing of news, flak and fear. Despite its first edition having been published 30 years ago, the propaganda model can explain why Western Media framed the 19th congress as it is an alarm bell for the Western Civilization.

First of all, there is an advertising sensitivity of Western mass media. Together with the digital revolution, the traditional media's advertising concept changed, advertisement based on the number of clicks gained a great significance. Reporting modestly of the 19th congress would have been meant that low bouncing and click-through rate which would reduce the amount of advertising. Western consumers

(readers) prefer popular and dramatic news rather than critical thinking. The Western mass media, thus, bring dramatic titles and exaggerated contents to forefront due to advertising concerns.

The sourcing of news is also an important issue. Contrary to popular belief, resources of media are limited. There are three types of resources of media which has great influence: government, business and experts. These resources are also the source of western way of thinking. The origin of the China's image in the Western hemisphere belongs to these three groups.

The flak or negative feedback is also important to understand the flawed news about the 19th congress. Criticizing the generally accepted and well-known facts in the Western hemisphere is a major risk to media's financial stability. If there is a pro-Chinese news framing about 19th congress, readers can respond in a ruthless way both politically and academically.

The fear is also one of the social control mechanisms. The China Threat is one of the sources of public fear to silence critical voices against elite interests. The China Threat became a source of public fear after the Cold War occasionally. The owners of the Western mass media are also elites of the society who have investments in other sectors such as arms industry.

These five filters are important to understand the 19th Congress being framed by the Western mass media. In fact, these filters construct the Western society which perceives the 19th congress as a national threat.

The way the Western mass media outlines the 19th Congress is generally incorrect. Chinese Communist Party congresses do not declare detailed declarations on the foreign policy of the country. The only source to reach foreign policy details is reports which are presented during the annual gathering of the National People's Congress. The party congress focuses on election of party leadership and general statements of national policies to many political realms (Swaine, 2017). The framing, made by Western mass media, is from the promises and wishes of Chinese politicians to capture voters or support like western-style election campaigns.

The revisionist statements did not take place during the 19th congress. There were foreign policy statements to maintain vision of Deng Xiaoping, intention of defending globalization toward a multipolar world while emphasizing peace and development. Xi Jinping said "*We must keep in mind both our internal and international imperatives, stay on the path of peaceful development, and continue to pursue a mutually beneficial strategy of opening up.*" Xi added, "*China will continue its efforts to safeguard world peace, contribute to global development, and uphold international order.*" The peaceful development is not abandoned. The high-level executives of the party are aware that economic development of the country is dependent on global status quo.

Xi Jinping devoted his speech to domestic issues substantially, such as poor living standards, environmental degradation, rising income gaps, distressing demographic imbalance and corruption. Despite the fact that People's Republic of China is drawing attention with its fast-growing economy, average living standards are still low for a large segment of society. The growing middle class can be misleading because it is not identical to the Western counterparts. The Chinese middle class lacks a coherent social, political and economic consciousness which is necessary to guide China to become a high-income economy (Miao, 2017). China has to increase living standards of its society and solve poverty to avoid the middle-income trap. The growth in GDP does not affect the large parts of the society and inefficient investments impede the economic growth of China in the long term.

In addition, environmental pollution has also caused major problems for China in the last years. Today, air pollution rate is very high in many Chinese cities. Twelve of the twenty most-polluted cities in the world are in China (Zheng, 2013:732). The water quality of the seven major rivers, especially Yangtze and Yellow Rivers, is reported to be deteriorating according to World Health Organization reports (World Health Organization, 2016).

China's domestic problems are ahead of its foreign policy priorities. Deng Xiaoping gave priority to domestic issues rather than foreign policy in his opening speech of the 19th congress. "The new age", which

is often mentioned by the Western media, refers a period in which China attaches importance to environmental politics, equality in income distribution, and transparency in government. Deng Xiaoping said “*We must pursue with firmness of purpose the vision of innovative, coordinated, green, and open development that is for everyone.*” He added “*We must do more to improve the lives and address the concerns of the people, and use development to strengthen areas of weakness and promote social fairness and justice.*” The similar expressions were dominant in the speech. To sum up, China’s ruling elites know the significance of peaceful development to join the group of high-income countries and they do not have any intention to abandon peaceful development.

The limited part of Deng Xiaoping’s speech that is devoted to foreign politics was related with Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan. Deng Xiaoping emphasized that China does not change its former policies towards its special administrative regions while maintaining principle of “one country, two systems” and ensuring that the central governments exercises their overall jurisdiction over Hong Kong and Macao. Deng Xiaoping also said that Taiwan is a part of the mainland China, and Beijing produces projects to ensure economic and social cohesion between Taiwan and mainland China. In addition, Deng Xiaoping talked about peace-giving projects, such as Belt and Road Initiative and Silk Road Fund. The emphasis on peaceful development was made with these words: “*We have made all-round efforts in the pursuit of major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, thus advancing China's diplomatic agenda in a comprehensive, multilevel, multifaceted way and creating a favorable external environment for China's development.*”

In general, it could be observed that China’s approach to most foreign policy issues is not in line with its representation in western media. The reasons behind this misrepresentation have been discussed with the help of Chomsky’s five filter approach which underlines the essence of deploying cultural institutional approach to dig out the motivation why western media behaves this way and pictures the actual situation. China’s economic development and policy choices influenced by this development generally pictured as a rise of a new enemy in eastern hemisphere. However, China and its leaders constantly display sensitivity both on country’s foreign policy and discourse. There has never been an inconsistency between its foreign policy and discourse since its economic development has been started. The 19th Congress has also not been an exception; most of its subjects were domestic issues and when it comes to foreign issues, Deng Xiaoping’s speech was peaceful and totally sensitive to all regional and global problems and utterly it was not revisionist against global system.

In the following section Korean Problem is discussed to exhibit China’s foreign policy stance. As it will be observed, China supports the status quo with serious security concerns in the first place. A change in the status quo, i.e. annexation of North Korea to the South, would present vital military border threat to China from Korea and its constant ally United States. Additionally, instability in North Korea may have been resulted in big immigration waves to China. These serious concerns about its domestic and foreign security may explain China’s poised policies.

4. POISED STANCE OF CHINA: NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR CRISIS

After North Korea invaded the South in 1950, People’s Republic of China fought alongside the North and lost approximately 500.000 soldiers in Korean peninsula against the United States and its allies. However, China and North Korea relations have not been linear. During the Cultural Revolution, Red Guards denounced North Korean leader Kim Il-sung as a revisionist because of his aristocrat stance and close relationship with the Soviet Union. When Deng Xiaoping began economic reform in China, North Korea denounced him as a revisionist that time. The normalization of China’s relations with South Korea in 1992 meant losing North Korea entirely for China. The Sino-North Korean relations was repaired with the visit of Kim Jong-Il to China in 2002 (Stevenson, 2017).

The North Korea nuclear crisis started in 1986 when five-megawatt nuclear reactor at Yongbyon constructed with the assistance of the Soviet Union. In 1994, North Korea and the United States signed an agreement to abolish its Yongbyon reactor in exchange for United States’ assist to build two new nuclear reactors for energy security purposes (Arms Control Association, 2018). In 2002, the North Korea found itself one of the members of axis of evil which George W. Bush presented. In the same year, the deal

between the United States and North Korea ended. In 2005, North Korea announced that it had nuclear weapons.

The 2017 was the year that North Korea became a global crisis with its endless nuclear weapons tests. On 9 August 2017, Donald Trump, the United States President, threatened the North Korea with fire and fury. As noted before, China has never played supporting role on nuclear development process of the North Korea. However, after the sanctions against North Korea, China became the biggest trade partner of the North Korea. China's foreign policy priorities against North Korea have taken shape since 2002. First of all, China is not in favor of overthrowing the regime of North Korea. To maintain North Korea's regime, China is trying to keep North Korea's economy alive and refuses to cut off trade links, despite the sanctions resolution of the United Nations Security Council. The main reason for China's endeavor to keep North Korea's regime alive is the potential threat of a united Korea for China. A united Korea may be able to influence Koreans who live in China in terms of irredentist ideas. In addition, a united Korea would become a satellite state of the United States. China also worries about the humanitarian crisis and immigration waves. China is in favor of protecting the status quo in the Korean peninsula and it has been implementing a North Korea policy to achieve this purpose since 2002.

China's solution proposal has been the same since the beginning of the crisis. China proposes that North Korea will freeze its nuclear weapon systems in exchange for the ending of the United States and South Korean military exercises on the North Korean border. North Korea accepted the proposal. However, the proposal was rejected by Barrack Obama in 2015. Donald Trump also rejected in 2017. Today, the proposal is still waiting to be approved without any major change. The North Korea crisis can be resolved with the mutual compromises without high-profile frequent threats by the United States.

The 19th Congress, which took place in April, did not change China's North Korean policy as it has done in other foreign policy areas until now. China continues its pro- status quo policy towards Korean Peninsula. China appreciates that international crisis means disruption of globalization which is the absence of a healthy environment for peaceful development.

As it could be noticed, China's foreign policy stance against a very important global problem, which occurs at its borders, is very constructive; at least, it is not aggressive. China has never displayed a revisionist behavior against global order, maybe a bit protective for its immediate vicinity. Contrary to Western media's representation about 19th Congress this poised stance on foreign policy issues including Korean problem has been preserved since the Congress.

CONCLUSION

This study examined skepticism of the Western societies towards China's economic growth and development which manifests itself on the Western mass media coverage of the Chinese Communist Party's 19th congress based on cultural-institutional perspective of the China threat theory. It also focused China's unique historical experiences to explain why China has insecurity about the Western world. The emphasis on historical experience was important to examine Chinese view of the foreign interference. This study used cultural-institutional perspective as it is more consistent to understand trust issue between China and the Western hemisphere. Socially constructed trust issue between China and the Western Hemisphere is something that needs attention. The classical-realist explanations are inadequate to comprehend this phenomenon. The India analogy was given for a better perception.

Media coverage of the Chinese Communist party's 19th congress was exaggerated and inaccurate and this manifested the trust issue of the Western hemisphere towards China. The reasons were grounded by five filters of the Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman. The basic building blocks of Western societies are hidden in these filters. The China Threat Theory is socially constructed by the news from these filters in the Western hemisphere. The media is an efficient tool for manufacturing consent and getting importance after the digital revolution. China's former and post-congress policies on the North Korean crisis were also examined to explore if there is a shift of Chinese foreign policy as claimed in the Western mass media as a case study. China is in favor of protecting the status que in the Korean peninsula and it has been

implementing a North Korea policy to achieve this purpose since 2002. There has been some major changes after the 19th congress and China's proposal to solve the crisis is still waiting to be approved by the United States.

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