



THE UNITED STATES-THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA RELATIONS: A SYSTEMIC LEVEL IMPACT ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Are the United States (the US)- the People's Republic of China (the PRC) relations inevitably headed for war? The US-the PRC relations constitute one of the most interesting topics in terms of international political studies. Precisely for this reason, the study of political relations between the US and the PRC is of the great importance in terms systemic level of the international political studies. The main purpose of this study is to show that the relations of the US and the PRC, as two influential acting units at the level of systemic international politics, are of competitive cooperation. In this study, Popperian falsification method was used in the context of political, economic and cultural data revealed by bilateral relations. The definition of the inevitably dragged into a war by the US-the PRC with a historicist perspective also brings with it an important problem in terms of international political studies. This point also creates an important opportunity to discuss the explanatory capacity of international political theories. Considering the Structural Realist Theory in the US-the PRC case, it is seen that military, economic and social relations are important in terms of influencing the structure as much as the formation of the structure. The US-the PRC relations, it is seen that a competitive cooperation structure has emerged rather than a process leading to war.

Keywords : International Relations, Theory of International Politics, Structural Realism, The US, The PRC.

JEL Classification : F50, F51, F52, F53, F55.

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ABD – ÇİN HALK CUMHURİYETİ İLİŞKİLERİ: SİSTEMİK DÜZEYDE BİR ETKİ ANALİZİ

Öz

Amerika Birleşik Devletleri (ABD) ile Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti (ÇHC) ilişkileri kaçınılmaz olarak bir savaşa mı gitmektedir? ABD-ÇHC ilişkileri uluslararası politika incelemeleri açısından en ilgi çekici konulardan birini oluşturmaktadır. Bu nedenle, ABD-ÇHC arasındaki politik ilişkilerin incelenmesi uluslararası politika çalışmalarının sistemik seviyesi için büyük bir önemi haizdir. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, sistemik uluslararası politika seviyesinde etkin bir şekilde eyleme kapasitesine sahip ABD ve ÇHC ilişkilerinin rekabetçi bir iş birliğine sahip olduğunu göstermektir. Bu çalışmada ikili ilişkilerin ortaya koyduğu siyasi, ekonomik ve kültürel veriler bağlamında Popperian bir yanıtlama metodu tercih edilmiştir. ABD-ÇHC'nin kaçınılmaz olarak bir savaşa sürüklenmesinin tarihsici bir bakış açısı ile tanımlanması da uluslararası politika çalışmaları açısından önemli bir sorunu beraberinde getirmektedir. Bu nokta aynı zamanda uluslararası politika teorilerinin açıklama kapasitesinin tartışılması için de önemli bir fırsatı yaratmaktadır. ABD-ÇHC özelinde Yapısal Realist teoriden konu ele alındığında askeri, ekonomik ve sosyal ilişkilerin yapının oluşumu kadar yapıya etki etme açısından önemli olduğu da görülmektedir. Buna ek olarak ABD-ÇHC ilişkileri bağlamında savaşa giden bir süreçten ziyade yarışmacı bir iş birliği yapısının oluştuğu da görülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler : Uluslararası İlişkiler, Uluslararası Politika Teorileri, Yapısal Realizm, ABD, ÇHC

JEL Sınıflandırması : F50, F51, F52, F53, F55.

INTRODUCTION

Are the United States (the US)-the People's Republic of China (the PRC) relations inevitably headed for war? This question will form the main research question of the study. The systemic structure of international politics does not have the infrastructure for the emergence of a large-scale war. The US and the PRC are exposed to the restrictive and equalizing pressure of the structure, like all other states that act in a systemic structure. Under these structural conditions, both states act together when their interests match and display a competitive behavior in conflict of interest. When the statements made by the US in the last ten years and the doctrines expressed as a result of each presidential change are considered alone, the claims that the bilateral relations are getting tense and towards an inevitable war are more frequently expressed in the current literature.

In the post-World War II period, in which the structure was formed at the systemic level, a large-scale war in which two states came together; it is not sustainable due to its economic burden and loss of human resources. These conditions have led the state at all levels, but especially the great powers, to acquire a broader and more indirect capacity, from economic aid to covert operations, to exercise their power capabilities and manipulate other states. In this study, firstly, the theoretical perspective will be defined in terms of the US-the PRC relations, then the mutual and systemic reflections of bilateral relations will be discussed in the context of the main question above and using the falsification method with a Popperian approach.

I.THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE UNITED STATES-THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA RELATIONS

As the most important of the units acting at the systemic level, states realize their mutual positioning through their power capacities. The power capacity of states can also be explained by the power relations that take place over time (Gilpin, 1981: 93). This approach of Robert Gilpin requires

that the distribution of power capacity should be addressed, as well as the necessity of revealing what kind of changes this requires over time. Graham T. Allison, quoting Napoleon for China; “China must be allowed to sleep; when it wakes up, it will shake the world.” (2017: 5). Two important names of international political studies reveal a historical process as a structure that is constantly advancing in a straight direction in their works. In this case, the question arises of how the relations of the US with China, which did not exist before the 17th century, can be examined on a historical plane. Secondly, questions arise about how to explain the foreign policy making process of a state established in America, a continent whose existence was not even known during the Thucydides period, with the sample of pre-modern city-states such as Athens and Sparta. These questions require a critique and falsification in the context of another Popperian approach, the poverty of historicism.

I.I. The United States-the People’s Republic of China Relations in the Perspective of Realist Theory

As power is acquired by a state, it elicits a quest for more (Carr, 1946: 112). This definition refers to an international political structure in which each state strives to increase its own power within a spiral of power struggle. Such an international political structure will become such that war is inevitable due to the intersection of sphere of influence. Hans J. Morgenthau; states that every state will want to take advantage of the power vacuum (1951: 135). The question at this stage; in terms of international politics, the only way to fill the power vacuum or to increase power should be war. The answer to this question may be “yes” for the period up to the World War II. On the other hand, for the new world order that emerged after the Second World War, it needs to be discussed how effective the war is for increasing the power or filling the power vacuum. The destructiveness of atomic power has been effective both in the formation of the international political structure at the systemic level and in the form of action. Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) has caused a fundamental change in the way power is acquired and maintained after the Second World War, incomparable with the period before the Second World War. This process of change and transformation required a change of perspective in terms of the struggles to apply and obtain power to be defined through war. Therefore, in the post-World War II period, as in Allison's definition, neither Napoleon nor Thucydides could set an example, and an international political structure emerged in which war was not the only and valid way for two or more states to increase or implement their power. In this case, the question arises at what level the US-the PRC political relations should be handled and with what limitations should they be analyzed. In order to answer this question, the impact of International Political Theory at the systemic level should be addressed with a critical perspective.

I. II. Theoretical Analysis of the Inevitable Relationship Between the United States-the People’s Republic of China

Maximization of power is particularly prominent in the classical interpretation of Realism. Edward Hallett Carr states that as maintaining the *status quo* will not be permanent, it is necessary to have the highest possible power level while adapting to changes in the balance of power (1946: 222). Morgenthau, with a similar view to Carr, states that it is necessary to have a sphere of influence, and that idealist approaches that will emerge in the opposite direction will lead to losses (1951: 133). Considering the period when these approaches emerged, it is clear that the restrictive effect of the systemic structure has not yet begun to be seen. In addition, the view that states are effective in solving problems through war, with a historicist approach, is quite popular. Despite these approaches, Morgenthau's definition of *policy of prestige* on the one hand, and Carr's definition of *power over opinion* on the other hand, showed the first signs that the power struggle can actually take place in other dimensions.

Kenneth N. Waltz also started to work on the concept of power with his doctoral thesis, which he started to prepare in the first years after the Second World War, when the discussions about the use of

the concept of power and how the balance of power was deepened. In Waltz's work, which was published in 1954 with the title *Man, the State and War*, power generation processes and relations between states were discussed through images. Waltz also put forward the view that the analysis of social structure is important with an approach similar to Carr in his work. At this point, Waltz divided world politics into liberal and socialist and explained how the two main world poles exhibited political behavior by addressing social interaction and development through images. In Waltz's work, it is stated that it is not possible to gain economic and political superiority through war in the new systemic structure that has emerged after the Second World War (2001: 99). In addition, the view that gaining superiority through war causes much greater losses compared to the destruction that comes with it; this is illustrated by an analogy between winning the war and winning the San Francisco earthquake (Waltz, 2001: 1). From the aforementioned perspective, it is possible to reach early indications that it would be very difficult to define a systemic level analysis with war alone. According to this approach, it is very difficult to conduct a theoretical analysis without determining human nature and an institutionalization based on it (Waltz, 2001: 28). In the post-World War II period, it has also been suggested that the harms of war can be eliminated as a result of the emergence of a harmony between the states so that lasting peace can emerge (Waltz, 2001: 163-64). In order to ensure harmony between states, it is suggested that a process in which discourse is developed with the mass media (Waltz, 2001: 70) on the one hand, and in which the elites become a factor in the context of institutionalization by revealing the social impact (Waltz, 2001: 75). When all these factors are taken into account, it is revealed that many components are important, especially in the Structural Realist perspective, apart from the war, which is the subject of classical discourse in the context of Realism. These factors, apart from economic activities, are the processes of the orientation of the elites in interstate relations and the processes of the guided elites redesigning their own societies. In order to test these propositions, the US-the PRC relations should be defined from military, economic and socio-political perspectives.

II. MILITARY, ECONOMIC AND SOCIO-POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE UNITED STATES-THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA RELATIONS

The increase in the economic capacity of the PRC and its global impact, especially as of the 2000s, have become visible on a large scale. But does the mere existence of economic power enable a state to be effective at the level of systemic international politics? This question brings with it the discussion of what military power is. The systemic international political structure that emerged after the World War II has undergone a transformation by restricting the use of military power. Long before Kenneth N. Waltz, Morgenthau put forward the view that the existence of weapons with high destructive capacity prevents wars in the context of the constraints of the systemic structure (Morgenthau, 1954: 408). In these circumstances, it highlights the possibility and ability of a state to use it as much as its weapon capacity.

III.I. Analysis of the United States-the People’s Republic of China Relations in the Context of Security

The US-China relations were established in the first half of the 19th century, within the framework of the US attempt to obtain its economic capacity by relying on its military power, along with the expansion process. Acting together with the United Kingdom in the aforementioned period, the US also obtained economic concessions with China in 1844, relying on its military support. From Carr's point of view, this event, which is a classic example of the fact that the US' efforts to gain economic influence in the period when the foundations of the crisis years were laid, went together with cooperation; it became more evident with the restrictive structure of the post-World War II period. In the period leading up to the Second World War, as of 1937, when Japan invaded China, the US provided military support to protect its commercial interests and access to the Asia-Pacific region (Lattimore, 1949: 142). During

the period leading up to the World War II, the US-the PRC forces, which did not face each other, experienced a hot conflict with the Korean War, after the World War II. Despite the military support provided by the US to the Chinese side for nearly two centuries, the main reason for the confrontation of the parties during the Korean War is the rapprochement of the PRC with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (the USSR) under Stalin's rule during the revolutionary movement carried out by Mao in 1949 (Chen, 2010: 3). Despite the convergence of the PRC and the USSR, it is also important to determine that the Beijing administration created an intersection point for the policies of the US and the USSR at the same time during the Cold War and became both the sphere of influence and the target of both powers (Chen, 2010: 2). From this point of view, it is difficult to determine that the US-the PRC forces that faced each other during the Korean War were in a definite hostility in terms of state structure and capacity, even during the Cold War.

The strategic alliance that emerged between the USSR and the PRC at the beginning of the Cold War, which meant that the political practices were interrupted for the US, collapsed with the border tension in 1969. The effectiveness of Mao's forces and the support of the USSR during the resistance of the PRC against the Japanese invasion brought the two states closer (Maxwell, 2007: 234). However, this rapprochement experienced the first tension when Mao received the support he wanted from Stalin with difficulty and at an insufficient level during the Korean War (Shen, 2010). While the tensions in the Korean War process continued; the maps that the USSR put forward by showing the lands in the border regions of China as its own domain with the claims of the Tsarist period strengthened the foundations of the tension (Maxwell, 2007: 238-39). These conditions developed and turned into the PRC-the USSR conflict. This situation, on the other hand, has created a potential for a security cooperation area for the US-the PRC. During the PRC-the USSR crisis, the main approach of officials such as the US and the PRC policy makers and security bureaucrats was pragmatic national security concerns rather than an ideological perspective. During the Taiwan Crisis, the US and the PRC forces tried to avoid a mutual conflict (Ross, 2001: 3). This is clear evidence of military efforts to avoid direct conflict.

In terms of US-the PRC relations, the 1970s also progressed in a security-oriented manner. Henry Kissinger attributes the reason for his 1973 visit to two main reasons. One of these reasons is Nixon's re-election and the preservation of the power of an authority on the Chinese side with which relations will be maintained for four years, and the other is that the US is seen by the PRC as a pillar in terms of the PRC-the USSR tension (Kissinger, 1982: 47). These conditions alone show that US-the PRC relations can get closer when it comes to security concerns. As the US-the PRC relations developed, the pressure of the USSR on the PRC increased. In 1969, when the USSR-the PRC border crisis began, the number of USSR divisions on the Chinese border increased from 21 to 33 in 1971 and to 45 in 1973 (Kissinger, 1982: 46). The increase in the military pressure of the USSR as a rival power in the rapprochement phase of the US-the PRC relationship emerges as an effort to direct the conditions that will reduce its interest or enable the *status quo* to develop against it in case of the convergence of the active actors in the systemic structure. In this case, the USSR sought to balance the situation with security activities despite all ideological commonalities with the PRC.

The US-the PRC military relations continued at a certain level from the 1970s until the Tiananmen incident in 1989. The US Secretary of Defense Harold Brown made contacts within the framework of the Carter administration's approach to forming a strategic alliance with the PRC against the USSR (Woon, 1989: 601-2). The visit of the US Secretary of Defense also refers to the period when the PRC initiated breakthroughs in its economic and military development. The aforementioned development of the PRC caused the US to take a step back in technology transfer, causing the bilateral relations to slow down. The reason behind this development is that the PRC poses a threat to the US by arms sales to the Middle East states, and the political attitude of the US in the face of the Tibetan uprising in 1987 is interpreted as an intervention in the internal affairs of the PRC. This stage of bilateral relations can be explained as the emergence of competition created by cooperation. During the Ronald Reagan administration, in March 1988, Chinese Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian visited Washington, and before this visit, the PRC also supported the US resolution 598 against Iran, causing a temporary optimism

(Woon, 1989: 613). However, the detection that the PRC continues to sell Silkworm missiles to Iran hindered the temporary recovery (Woon, 1989: 613). The *Irangate* scandal continues to occupy the agenda of the US, while the sale of Silkworm missiles by the PRC to Iran strains relations.

Although the US-the PRC relations became more strained with the Tiananmen incident, a process in which the mutual positioning militarily became more evident has emerged as of the 2000s. The US, through the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), has banned the possible contracts that will be formed in favor of the armed forces of the PRC, which it defines as the People's Liberation Army, with the approach it has put forward in the early 2000s and revised and developed in the later period (Erickson, 2019: 127). In addition, with the revisions made in the NDAA between 2017-19, steps were taken to prevent the PRC's military activities in the South China Sea and to prevent any claims of territorial gain (Erickson, 2019: 128). Despite these restrictions, the US-the PRC exchanged Visiting Military Personnel mutually, and agreements were signed by Barack Obama and Xi Jinping for the safety of navigation in the South China Sea (Erickson, 2019: 129-30). The fact that the parties take steps to prevent and restrict each other on the one hand, and take steps together in the context of security on the other hand, shows that there is a common point in the context of economic interests, albeit by necessity.

II.II. Economic Dimension of the United States-the People’s Republic of China Relations

There is a significant relationship between the establishment of the US-the PRC economic relations and the peak of diplomatic relations in 1979. A new era has been entered with the establishment of the said relationship. Prior to this process, the terms added by Jackson-Vanik to the Trade Agreement signed in 1974 in order to become the Most Favored Nation (MFN) in the context of the US-the PRC economic relations were periodically revised and renewed (Wang, 1993: 442). This emerging condition also prepared the possibility for the US-the PRC economic relations to encounter sharp changes under changing conditions. In terms of intellectual property rights, economic relations between the US and the PRC have been problematic since the beginning of the 90s. It is stated that the loss due to the intellectual property rights violations of the PRC in the US was 400 million dollars as of 1991, and 300 million dollars of this was related to software (Wang, 1993: 447). Considering that the US' exports to the PRC were 6 billion 278 million 200 thousand dollars and its imports were 18 billion 969 million 200 thousand dollars in the aforementioned year (Foreign Trade U.S. International Trade Data, 2022), it will be understood that the effect corresponds to the export figure of the US for approximately one month. With the exception of the Tiananmen incident between the US and the PRC in the 90s, the employment of political prisoners as workers has also come to the fore as a very effective and unresolved issue in terms of commercial relations (Wang, 1993: 453). However, all these issues did not constitute an obstacle to the development of US-the PRC economic relations.

Presidential candidate Bill Clinton, who criticized the George Bush era in terms of relations with the PRC, preferred to maintain relations with the PRC as the elected president (Wang, 1993: 461). In 1989, the first period of the George Bush administration, the US' exports to the PRC were 5 billion 755 million 400 thousand dollars and its imports were 11 billion 989 million 700 thousand dollars; In his last period, in 1992, exports increased to 7 billion 418 million 500 thousand dollars and imports increased to 25 billion 727 million 500 thousand dollars (Foreign Trade U.S. International Trade Data, 2022). In 1993, the first term of Bill Clinton, exports were 8 billion 762 million 900 thousand dollars, imports were 31 billion 539 million 900 thousand dollars, in his period, exports were 13 billion 111 million 100 thousand dollars and imports were 81 billion 788 million 200 dollars (Foreign Trade U.S. International Trade Data, 2022). Although Bill Clinton held the presidency longer than George Bush, spending two terms in the presidency, the significant rise in trade volume is clear.

In the period starting from the George W. Bush era to the era of Joe Biden between 2001 and 2021, exports started with 19 billion 182 million 300 thousand dollars and imports started with 102 billion 278 million 400 thousand dollars and exports were 151 billion 442 million 200 thousand dollars and imports were 504 billion 935 million 400 thousand dollars (Foreign Trade U.S. International Trade

Data, 2022). It is clear that there has been a much greater development in terms of bilateral trade relations in the twenty-year period. With these figures, it is seen that there is actually a large trade volume between the two states. In addition, the PRC holds the majority of its foreign exchange reserves of around two trillion dollars, of which the US government debt is in dollars (Kirshner, 2010: 70). Under these circumstances, it is clear that the US-the PRC economic relations are directly related to the exchange rate of the dollar. In addition to this, the loss of the US market will bring about a significant economic loss for the PRC, considering the above US import amounts. For all these reasons, the economic interests of both the US and the PRC force both states to open and develop their markets and economic activities mutually.

II.III. The United States-the People’s Republic of China Socio-Political Relations

One of the important pillars of relations between states is the relations that emerge through social structures. The emergence and interaction of these structures brings about the capacity of mutually directing each other; it also has a political dimension. The mentioned interaction also emerges primarily on the basis of economic activities. Gilpin states that the most important factor for understanding world politics is not the static power distribution, but the dynamic structure of power relations that have emerged over time (Gilpin, 1981: 93). In this dynamic structure, socio-political structures that emerged with economic relations also occupy an important place. Because, considering Waltz's approach, with the statement that providing economic and political gain through war is similar to winning the San Francisco earthquake, the social relations emerging from economic relations and the political environment created by these relations constitute a more productive area. In this respect, the investment activities of the PRC-affiliated companies in the US are important for social-political definitions.

The fact that the PRC-affiliated companies investing in the US are directed by the state, contrary to the liberal economic understanding of the US, also develops the opinion that the relevant companies are also a trojan horse (Lorraine & Miller, 2009: 126). In order to do business within the borders of the US, the Liability of Foreignness must be fulfilled (Lorraine & Miller, 2009: 123). The difficulties that foreign companies face in the process of doing business in the US, and more administrative and economic responsibilities compared to local companies, with names such as foreign responsibility, reveals a fundamental exclusion (Lorraine & Miller, 2009: 123). Such approaches are shaped by the perspective of social institutions towards companies with foreign capital, and the structure in question is based on social beliefs and norms (Lorraine & Miller, 2009: 124). Thus, an interaction structure emerges that derives from economic relations and affects social relations deeply. In other words, economic activity also influences and directs social relations.

The fact that economic relations affect the structure by influencing social relations also directs the legal processes. With the Sarbanes-Oxley law, which came into force in the US as of 2002, the authority to examine the financial situation of foreign company managers who invest in the US with the support of foreign government has been established (Lorraine & Miller, 2009: 129). In addition, human rights violations in the PRC, the problems of the PRC-supported companies regarding the protection of property rights in the US, and activities such as insider trading negatively affect the US-the PRC socio-political relations (Lorraine & Miller, 2009: 132). Another relationship establishment in socio-political sense is educational activities.

The education programs, which ended as a result of the rising tension between the US and the PRC in the 1950s with the effect of the Korean War, were re-established with the US' recognition of the PRC in 1979 and the establishment of diplomatic relations, and continued despite all the tense relations (Peck, 2014: 30). Despite the tense periods of relations, student exchange, especially from the PRC to the US, also shows that the US is an important source of development for the PRC in the field of education. After the cultural revolution in China, especially between 1966-76, the number of students who went to the US was at the highest level compared to all other states (Peck, 2014: 31). In addition, by 1983, Chinese students made up 10% of all foreign students; the Chinese student population in the US has brought significant economic contributions, directly and indirectly (Peck, 2014: 31). In response

to the significant increase in the number of international students sent from the PRC to the US, there has also been a significant increase in the number of American universities in the PRC (Peck, 2014: 31). Thus, the US made an effort to engage cultural diplomacy by implementing cultural policies through student exchange (Peck, 2014: 32). The number of Chinese students in the US, which was 157 thousand 558 in the 2010-2011 academic year, increased to 317 thousand 299 in the 2020-2021 academic year (Number of College and University Students from China in the United States from Academic Year 2010/11 to 2020/21, 2022). In addition, in the aforementioned ten-year period, the 2019-2020 academic year is the period with the highest enrollment of 372 thousand 532 Chinese students (Number of College and University Students from China in te United States from Academic Year 2010/11 to 2020/21, 2022). Despite all the tension that has arisen when looked at the scale of these figures, the gain brought by educational activities in the context of the US- the PRC relations are important. Based on this achievement, Chinese students receive an advanced education in their fields and benefit their states and contribute to the economic and political development of the PRC. For the US, the possibility of the emergence of a sphere of influence is created in the context of education and cultural influence.

Kenneth N. Waltz, in *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis*, states that the development of the individual leads to social development, despite the problems of the administration (2001: 86). In addition, Waltz clearly states that a political theory can be put forward by defining human nature (2001: 28). Educational activities are very important in terms of directing human nature. Thus, the mindset of a person can be affected and transformed. At this point, it should be discussed which side effects the other more. Even if a socio-political effect is created with educational activities in the context of the US-the PRC relations, it is clear that no step can be taken in the context of transforming or influencing the elites of the PRC. On the other hand, both states continued to communicate with each other through education and cultural diplomacy, even under the tensest conditions. The formation of this relationship model clearly shows that there is both cooperation and struggle in the context of interests, both at the systemic level and in the context of foreign policy in international politics. Regional institutionalization efforts constitute an important area of the aforementioned struggle.

III. REGIONAL INSTITUTIONALIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES-THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA RELATIONS

Coalition activities are a unit that should be examined in the context of structuralist International Political Theory at the systemic level (Waltz, 1979: 100). The results of the military, economic and socio-political dimensions of the US-the PRC relations are important in the context of regional activities in terms of systemic level. Preventing the economic burden and loss of people caused by the large-scale invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq after 9/11 by the US; it has affected foreign policy practices on a large scale, starting from the security policies of the US. Despite the remarkable economic developments that emerged during the George Bush era and the relations based on the education-culture interaction set forth above, the US also supports and shapes regional alliances in order to contain the PRC in the Asia-Pacific region. On this strategic basis, the US carries out its political activities within the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) (Jianren, 2019: 4). In the report dated January 5, 2012, signed by US Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta and US President Barack Obama, within the framework of the PRC's containment effort, the importance of operating in the Asia-Pacific region is emphasized (U.S. Department of Defense, 2012: 2). While the most important feature of the Obama era was to strengthen its allies in the region and to try to gain new allies for itself; efforts have been made to show that the US is a permanent power in the region rather than a visiting power (Jianren, 2019: 24). In order to conclude this effort, the US is making efforts to develop relations with Association of South Asian Nations (ASEAN) in the context of economic and security policies (Jianren, 2019: 25). From another point of view, this strategy of the US also aims to contain the PRC on a regional scale.

As of 2011, the amount of foreign direct investment in the ASEAN region was 88 billion 900 million dollars and increased by 3.76% compared to the previous year (The Association of Southeast

Asian Nations, 2012: 1). The total Gross Domestic Product of ASEAN member states was 2 trillion 200 billion dollars in 2011, an increase of 5% compared to 2010 (The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2012: 1). Considering all these figures, the interest of the US in the Trans-Pacific trade region as a global power trying to solve economic problems as of the Obama era can be understood more clearly. The US, while carrying out various activities in the fields of education and economy with the PRC, has intensified its efforts to develop relevant relations in the context of security policies, especially in the last ten years, as the regional economic area has witnessed activities in its favor with the ASEAN member states.

While some of Indo-Pacific states produce closer security policies with the US in terms of security policies, an effort is made to establish a relationship network in terms of economic policies and cultural activities. However, despite this effort to develop cultural and diplomatic relations, the political problems between the states such as Taiwan and the PRC in the region remain current in terms of the US-the PRC struggle. Although the political movement, which was defined as nationalist China and had to operate in Taiwan, did not have great differences from the PRC citizens in terms of language and nationality, it experienced a great divergence with the problems of not accepting their legitimacy by the PRC and returning to the mainland of China as a result of their political attitudes and behaviors (Kallgren, 1965: 12). When the US' contributions to the development of Taiwan's military capacity were added to this separation, the tension between the PRC and Taiwan increased even more.

Apart from Taiwan's political situation, the fact that the North and South Korean governments are supported by the PRC and the South by the US reveals another element of regional tension. In the face of the US' arms sales to Taiwan and expanding economic cooperation, the PRC also supports the North Korean administration economically and militarily (Nanto & Manyin, 2011: 95). In the Asia-Pacific region, on the one hand, regional integration initiatives are supported by the US against the PRC, and on the other hand, the US and the PRC use their relations with the states they are in contact with to restrict each other. From this point of view, in the perspective of *Critical Theory*, it is expected that the subjective meanings that emerge with the relations of production and cultural connections will develop in favor of the PRC and reveal its regional dominance. However, the situation shows a network of relations in which the US is relatively more dominant. The reason for this is related to the establishment of the structure at the systemic level. In the post-World War II period, the US has a great weight in the formation of the structure, both in terms of military and economic direction. This situation also affects the formation of regional alliances. Although the PRC has cultural common points that are relatively close to the US with the states in the region, the systemic level impressive economic and military capacity and the possibility and ability to use this capacity have developed in favor of the US as a unit that contributes heavily to the formation of the structure.

CONCLUSION

The US-the PRC relations do not inevitably lead to war. In the context of both regional alliances and bilateral relations, both the US and the PRC try to contain each other and develop cooperation with each other. At the systemic level, which can also be called the new world order that emerged after the Second World War, the interaction of units and their forms of action take place in this direction. The US and the PRC, as two powers that can have an impact at the systemic level, have an impact on the systemic level in the context of their bilateral relations, in other words, in the context of the foreign policy making process. This effect, as adopted by the Structural Realist perspective, develops in a way that confirms the proposition of constraints and equals to the acting units once the structure is formed. Instead of initiatives that will trigger the formation and change of the *status quo*, both states take cautious steps in bilateral relations and foreign policy practices, which will increase their own interests if possible, and if not, contain the other.

The limited military power of the PRC compared to the US reveals a situation that focuses on creating economic and cultural influence in the field of international politics. On the other hand, in addition to this capacity, and more importantly, the US can also lead international institutions such as ASEAN, in terms of military capacity. This capacity of the US is also challenging various cooperation areas for the PRC, considering its global operational activities. As exemplified above, the sale of weapons by the PRC to Middle Eastern states such as Iran resulted in the implementation of economic restrictions by the US and pressure in international institutions. The US’ arming of states such as Taiwan, which poses a threat to the PRC, or its support for regional institutionalization efforts such as ASEAN, in terms of military activities, received a limited response from the PRC.

Karl Popper’s method of falsification is based on the logic that instead of determining that all swans are black, it is sufficient to show that one swan is white. In the context of the US-the PRC relations, competitive cooperation has been clearly demonstrated throughout the study. The white swan of this study is any emerging field of cooperation between the US and the PRC. In this framework, many areas of cooperation have been identified between the US and the PRC in both economic, military and cultural fields. Despite the tense security relations, the increasing economic activities between the US and the PRC have reached a remarkable level. Despite this situation, which poses an important threat to the economic leadership of the US, the import-export imbalance of the US is developing in favor of the PRC. The US balances this situation with regional institutionalization activities and efforts to add a security dimension to these institutionalization activities. However, it is clear that this field of struggle creates an environment for economic cooperation as well as cultural diplomacy and cooperation. In terms of educational activities, the relationship between the US and the PRC draws a gradually developing picture. This shows that, as a result of a possible the US-the PRC war, the destruction that will occur both in the two states and globally will not occur in favor of any state. Thus, the problem of the structural realist perspective should be brought into consideration once again. Just as the San Francisco earthquake cannot be won, a large-scale war will not be won by either side.

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