THESES OF THE PhD DISSERTATION

of

Márta Bartha-Rigó

The security approach of “Zhongguo” – Dissertation on the relationship between Chinese security and the UN

Supervisors:

Dr. habil. Mihály Dobrovits, PhD Program director, Center for Security and Defence Studies

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1. Research History and Justification of Topic

China is the "number one" country when its territory, population and economic potential are taken into account. Its army is ranked among the largest in the number of people, which is supported by the growing budget from year to year. It also intends to raise its funding for research and development by 2020, to spend 2.5% of GDP. If we consider the immaterial factors of power; social cohesion within the Han nationality is very strong. In addition, soft power offers a new perspective for China, which it intends to use not only with the establishment of Confucius Institutes worldwide, but with its growing role and influence in international organizations as well. The "Zhongguo - Middle Kingdom" approach perfectly symbolizes the Chinese idea of their country's place in the world; restoring its central power has been a goal since the humiliation of the opium wars.

Since 1949, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has brought progress. The country has regained itself step by step. First to mention is being exemplary for some states in the developing world (Beijing consensus). Secondly, the hegemony of the Western system feels its position threatened by an emerging one for the first time. The country's return to the world stage is not only manifested in multiplied diplomatic relations but also in the possession of power factors. Due to these facts, a number of people are trying to understand China at both political and academic levels. Experts can be divided into several groups based on the approach they use to understand how China sees itself and explains its own behaviour. Most of these ideas are based on philosophical and historical foundations; trying to find action patterns between different ages. Based on these, we can set up four categories.

1. The first category is named the dynastic circle and is a typical Chinese perspective. It is based on an economic approach where, following the rebuilding and the growth phase, tension is emerging in the society with the imposition of higher taxes and the increase of corruption, leading to the survival or collapse of the dynasty.

2. The second is a progressive view that shows a classic Western historical approach. The representation of history, an inescapable march to a brighter and brighter future; a step by step progress, where progress is self-evident and inevitable.

3. The third approach is best described with the phenomenon of Eastern despotism, which is now identified with Asian values. This view was raised by Karl Wittfogel in his 1957 published work. The underlying idea is that control over water resources is the starting point for Asian production and Asian bureaucracy, which called the theory
as a water monopoly. The other name of this model is the historical approach of Post-Maoism, which is taught in China with a faint Marxist colour.

4. The fourth framework focuses on the conflict between nomadic shepherds and settled farmers, which explains the changes in China's power with the barbarian attacks from outside China.

The present dissertation, however, applies the International Relations (IR) theory, so the analysis uses not simply historical but multidisciplinary approaches. Its starting point is based on the core keyword security theme in IR theories, and from this point of view tries to analyse Chinese foreign policy. The author is aware that this discipline has Western roots and works with concepts used for the Western world. To resolve this problem, we see that the realistic thesis - in pursuit of power for security - is transposed to China-compatible. The meaning of world power used in the Western world means power maximization, and from the Chinese perspective the need to create security is called the Middle Kingdomness. Achieving this status is a developmental path; it is built as the pyramids have been built, step by step. The PRC has made a long way since 1949. Almost 70 years have passed since the establishment of the state, and by the 2000s it had earned prestige in the international arena. So far, China has been trying to make up for the shortcomings of the West, but now as an equal partner in the international arena, it wants to act on the systemic level to protect its interests. For this reason, his interests dictate to move towards multilateral diplomacy, where it can strengthen its external and internal security with a new means by enforcing his interests.

In the light of these considerations, the paper seeks to find out how international institutions, highlighting the United Nations (UN), help Beijing to strengthen its security; how they serve the achievement of the idea of Zhongguo.

The division of the thesis is as follows, in order to answer the question: after delimiting the subject, we analyse the world of orientalism in order to explain the difficulty that Western socialization means when we want to deal with the East. Secondly, the terms, the idea of the formation of the Middle Empire and the definitions of Western security, are explained in the dissertation. We particularly emphasize the concept of the security dilemma, which represents the defensive steps of China as a threat to others. After clarifying the concepts, two models created by the author are derived; one of them is a triangle of the Chinese state, society and an international organization (Triangle of the factors), and the other model shows the path to security (Zhongguo pyramid). As a case study, the relationship between China and the United Nations will be presented, examining how the UN contributes
to China’s external and internal security on the basis of the first model. The core element of this study is based on a report issued at the National Congress of the Communist Party of China: "We will actively participate in multilateral affairs, to support the United Nations, the Group of 20 Nations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the BRIC countries played an active role in improving the international system order and fair and reasonable direction."

Given the framework of the dissertation, it is not possible to examine each institution separately, therefore only the United Nations will be presented to better illustrate the models. In this chapter we analyse the Chinese voting behaviour within the Security Council, gathering the information on which decisions they have used their veto or abstained from voting. On the basis of the special reports published by the UN, we will make tables about these reasons and briefly describe them as well. As a case study, we will present China's relationship with Africa, including how the use of veto and the behaviour of abstaining influenced their relationship and how they contributed to China's security.

Research seeks to demonstrate that while China is trying to redefine itself within the international system by restoring the idea of the Zhongguo, it attempts to alleviate the emerging threat in the international institutions, resolving the problem of security dilemma. Multilateralism thus contributes to its security in three ways:

- With the permanent membership of the Security Council, its interests can be enforced internationally, while
- the fear of other states can be moderated and
- it can replace its capacities and deficiencies existing on the international level.

However, this does not necessarily mean that Beijing is opposed to a system based on the West. In this system, it has become more socialized and has taken more and more norms and regulations from international institutions, reducing part of its security challenges in this way. In addition, Chinese rhetoric denounces multipolarity as a principle in international relations that contradicts the unipolar system. Roosevelt's four policemen theory may well stand still today, as in 1944, as the economic crisis that crashed in 2008 requires more resources from states to address their internal problems. The ability of the United States to send troops to the world and to maintain military bases is getting more and more resistance at home. The problem of the role of a “single policeman” was already recognized by the Reagan administration, since Chinese military modernization had come to anchor with American aid in the 1980s. For this reason, the Asian balance of power does not only mean a competition, but also the emergence of "new Asian policemen" who can work together for the future of the
region. However, according to Washington the US is supposed to create the "Asian NATO" with emerging Asian countries (India, Japan, South Korea) to counter China. Due to the settlement in Afghanistan, NATO has established closer ties with several Asian states, which would not be a problem, but suggests a picture of counterbalancing of China due to the complexities of the region and the Sino-US relationship.

As a result of this research, we can gain a better insight into the relationship between China and the outside world, as well as the internal factors that determine it. A Chinese security concept could appear among the definitions of security. By using the triangle of the factors, it is not only the linkage between China and an international organization, but also the components and drivers of the relationship between China and another state. If we look at the analysis on China in general, this study seeks out a different approach to Chinese foreign policy research. It is not necessarily meant to provide an alternative in the literature, but it can be interpreted as an alloy of the approaches.

For better understanding of the dissertation topic, the author lists the methodological reasons why she named the relationship between the People's Republic of China and the United Nations as a research topic.

1. China as an emerging power.

A number of studies deal with China's world power ambitions, in which there are several possible outcomes about the state's future. One of them argues that China takes over the leadership from the United States. Others only explain the new role of China with the G2 concept. The third opinion is that nothing changes because China has been socializing in the "Pax Americana" atmosphere and does not want to transform it. From any point of view, it is important for everyone to understand China. The main reason for the concerns about China's growing power is that we do not understand China in the West, we can not predict its steps. The paper attempts to explain the actions of China by approaching the Zhongguo idea from the security perspective.

2. Are international institutions the guardians of peace or the extended hands of the great powers?
There has also been a discourse on the role of international institutions, and different theoretical schools associate them with different meanings. Liberalism emphasizes the institutions' ability to provide a forum and a negotiating table to the states, thus creating a more peaceful environment. Realists characterize the institutions as prolonged tents of great powers, as they secure the survival of the powers of the great powers. Constructivists see them as a potential for a new socialization medium, where internationalization of norms can create a more peaceful atmosphere. It is interesting to link these points of view with how China behaves in institutions, and what steps it takes.

3. The impact of Asian balance of power on China's international organizations role.

From the 18th to 19th century, the continental balance of power applied by Britain was to prevent a terrestrial power from undergoing full control of Europe. Today, the literature speaks of a new kind of power balance in the Asian region, where besides China the United States, Russia, Japan and India are also active participants. There are a lot of unsettled questions in the region: firstly, Beijing's and Washington's strategic rivalry, secondly, Moscow's demand to continue to count as the inner backyard of the former Soviet republics, finally Japan and India are no longer only an American ally in regional politics, but independent actors as well. So we can talk about two big groups (China and Russia vs. USA, Japan and India) and a new type of five-star model. In this power system, China has few factors that would turn the scale to it.

- Its federal network is not dense in the region, which can be attributed to historical reasons such as the late independence of the states of the region or the existing territorial disputes.
- Despite the huge number of staff, Chinese military power is underdeveloped despite being a nuclear power. Thus, the US 7th fleet can only guarantee the peace in the region.
- Because of its economic strength, it has been recognized as a dominant power in the Asian region, but economic development seems to be stagnant.
- In the regional institutions, because of the fears of rising, China takes low-profile to gain the trust of the states in the region.
It strives to keep balance with the place and the increased activity in the international organizations, according to this assumption and taking the example of the United Nations, China uses international organisations as the tool of soft balancing in regional affairs.

4. China's regional relations, which include elements of co-operation and conflict.

China's regional relations are characterized by mutual co-operation and confrontation. In the Central Asian region, elements of co-operation can be observed. The importance of this area can be explained not only by the major oil and natural resources, but also as a transit region towards Iran, Afghanistan, India and Pakistan, which will revive the historical Silk Road. Beijing attempts to fill the vacuum after the break-up of the Soviet Union and reduce US influence with the help of the Shanghai Organization Cooperation, which now seems to be successfully heading towards its goal.

The Korean Peninsula is strategically important due to its geographical position, which is complemented by historical, political, cultural and psychological dimensions. For China, Korea means its "back yard"; Beijing can not let it go in the exclusive sphere of influence of another great power.

The islands of the South and East China Sea have a complex strategic importance for China. Beijing has a disproportionate territorial dispute with several ASEAN Member States and with Japan in the case of the Senkaku Islands. The driving force behind these conflicts is the large capacity of natural oil and gas deposits in the continental shelf, in addition to the shipping routes.

The relationship between Japan and China has taken a positive direction since 2007. On both sides, signs of calmness emerged at the top level, which were embodied in the formation of united stances on defence co-operation (Rácz, p. 18). At the same time, renewed warming is still perceived by the fear of each other, namely Japan's growing military spending and the intense Washington-Tokyo co-operation. Because of these China opposes the Japanese bid on permanent SC membership. The development of relations, however, indicates that both states have recognized that stability in the region can only be achieved through joint cooperation, which means the integration of China into the Asia-Pacific region and the joint protection of South China Sea shipping routes.
China perceives its neighbour as a threat due to the fact that Washington has been gathering allies around the area, and questioning China's political system and the Asian values. Additionally, growing instability, ethnic tensions and Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia are a major source of danger for Beijing, taking into account the issue of Tibet and Xinjiang. The potential spill-over effect of the Korean Peninsula would also negatively effect on the Korean minority in China, which would disrupt the peace of the border region. So China is interested in being in peace and keeping stability in the region to be able to keep its economy at a high level.

5. Regional and international fears caused by the modernization of the Chinese military.

Military ability is an important measure in the determination of the balance of power, the formation of international influence and the defence of our interests. So it is perfectly understandable that it was already announced in the "Four Modernization" program by Teng Xiao-ping in 1978, however, at its last step. Military developments are motivated by several factors:

- China has historical experience of the consequences of weakness and therefore decided to use the principle of "better to be godzilla than bambi" in the future;
- A new type of military crescent begins to emerge around China, which is supported by the United States;
- We must also mention a relationship with the Chinese way of thinking: just as jing complements yang in Chinese philosophy, the degree of economic power must be balanced with the state's military, political and moral rank.

The modernization of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is a reflection, since learning from the Soviet Union's mistake and the danger of arming overpowered, the 2008 White Paper on National Defence also emphasizes that the growth of the economy and the development of national defence must be in line with each other (Jordan, 2011, p. 33).

The Chinese military doctrine came from the "folk war" theory to "local wars in the midst of the conditions of information warfare," including the basics of non-traditional, asymmetric, informational, economic, psychological, and space rescue skills.
The change in military doctrine has also led to a rise in defence spending, which is feared due to the lack of transparency. The Chinese military budget is actually growing year after year, but its GDP-related rate reflects continuity from the 1990s.

6. Ideal terrain to test the theory.

China's security motivations and the resulting security dilemma provide an ideal platform for supporting the theory used in the dissertation. The greater power contributes only to greater security while at the same time making the extra power that it creates more visible and reliable with the help of international institutions.

7. Proper Background Literature.

There is exhaustive literature available to the researcher on this topic, but still there is a possibility of approach from a new perspective. Western and Chinese literature can also be found in libraries, print media and online databases.

8. Personal interest in the subject.

The author has been dealing with China in the field of international studies since starting tertiary education, writing term papers and the bachelor and master theses on China. She also spent half a year in Shanghai at Shanghai University of International Studies, where she was able to develop her language skills while attending the lectures. In addition to the university education, the author also had the opportunity to speak with professors and ordinary people to get a better picture of Chinese thinking. These experiences contribute greatly to the quality of the dissertation.
2. Methods Used

Observation, systematic data collection, classification and systematization of data, statements made on the basis of data are self-evident tools of all scientific activities.

The dissertation basically relies on three sources. One of the most important of these is the available domestic and foreign scientific literature. In processing foreign literature, the author pays particular attention to keep the objectivity of the paper alongside Western experts and writers of Eastern authors. The analysis aims to process and present research and studies in the field of security, foreign policy and modern China studies. However, it is important to emphasize that the range of resources on this topic is very wide and, unfortunately, the study can not be fully mastered on each element of the subject, but the author seeks to process it as much as possible.

In order to explore relationships with the institutions, it is important to know the founding document, the order of operation of the given institution and the reports and common objectives issued during the meetings. The papers and declarations used in the thesis were selected with a meaningful explanation of relevance to the topic. The Chinese speeches at UN SC meetings and the joint declarations issued at the China-Africa Cooperation Forum (FOCAC) are the basis for the case study and the primary sources of research.

As a third source of the dissertation, personal experience and the many years of interest in China are important. The Chinese State Scholarship provides first-hand information, impressions and Chinese language skills at the Shanghai University of International Relations.

The research is based on a multidisciplinary approach. This includes some areas of international political theory, history and international economics. The timeframe of the dissertation extends from 1949 to the present, but it is necessary to start from earlier to better understand Chinese security. The analysis covers three areas. Security and the role of institutions in the literature will be presented by means of comparison. However, a historical
analysis is needed to understand the Chinese-style security concept and China's relationship with the United Nations. Exploring the factors of Chinese security is presented with a model developed by the author, which can be considered as new research, beside on Chinese vetoes and abstentions structured into table. The author emphasizes that she uses the Hungarian translation version of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences when mentioning Chinese words, personal names and names of cities. The research is founded on the hypothesis that the complexity of the Chinese state's security and the Zhongguo idea can be simplified to one key factor, which means maintaining the state's current political order and territorial integrity, so it is assumed that Chinese foreign policy is subordinated to domestic politics. This hypothesis is to be proven with four sub-hypotheses:

1. The first sub-hypothesis (H1) is that the use of the concept of security studies dominated by Western experts is not always applicable to the explanation of China's security due to its different historical past, political structure and the ever-changing international order.
2. The second sub-hypothesis (H2) is that China uses the international institutions to enforce its interests by alleviating Western fears.
3. The third sub-hypothesis (H3) is that interests in China's foreign policy are in the forefront of values.
4. The fourth sub-hypothesis (H4) is that China is an important regional and international player, but to increase its power to ensure its interests in both arenas, it uses the multilateral framework.

The research question focuses on how multilateral diplomacy enhances China's security. Thus, the subject of the research is one possible explanation of the Chinese definition of security; transposing the theory of the Middle Kingdom into a security dimension. The central topic of the dissertation is summarized in three terms: security, international institutions and China. These three concepts make it justified to focus on the changing concept of security and the ideas of the distinguished representatives of the institutional school. By making the thesis truly "Chinese-colour", it is inevitable that we try to translate the Western expressions into "Mandarin". Here, however, we need to point to the fact that a Western scholar tries to explain the probable Chinese point of view, therefore it is essential to broaden the scope of the analysis to orientalism. Accordingly, the dissertation begins with a literature review of the three concepts already mentioned, with secondary sources available to us. On the basis of the research model it can be said that the research is
interpreted by interpreter logic, which attempts to examine the subject of the research in its own medium and understand it in the system in which it is formed. This means that starting with orientalism, being aware at objectivity, we are trying to understand China's foreign policy actions in international institutions, organized around the idea of the Middle Kingdomness. The interpretative approach is justified by several reasons. Ontologically speaking, our knowledge of the East is a picture constructed by Western society, which means a high degree of subjectivity. From an epistemological point of view, our knowledge so far has been created by subjective reporting associations. In examining value theory, this means that research is always valuable. Therefore, compliance with the subject matter, theoretical openness, the perspective of the actors is inevitable. To achieve compliance with the subject matter, theoretical openness of the researcher is needed. This can only be achieved by placing ourselves in the viewpoint of actors and reconstructing this in the perspective of the researcher. This requires communication links between the researcher and the actors. The idea of the Zhongguo emerging from the dissertation, as well as a theoretical concept for the explanation of the Chinese concept of security, follows this logic, hoping that the required communication channel is based on the six-month time spent in China and the conducted researches so far. The approach, accordingly, is rather a deductive structure; we want to present a theoretical starting point for a case study, thus giving a new framework of interpretation to China's foreign policy. At this point, we move away from Orientalism and the Eastern concept as we have known in the historical descriptions, transplanted into the international studies discipline and used there.

The population of the research is provided by international institutions in which China is a member, but the systematic sampling is based on 4 institutions (the United Nations, the G-20, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the BRIC states) mentioned in the above-mentioned report. Given the framework of the dissertation, however, a threading approach has to be applied, so the case study focuses on the relationship between China and the United Nations. The research follows a longitudinal study; a single case study examines the relationship between China and the United Nations, highlighting China's voting behaviour in SC. From a technical point of view, we work with qualitative data, which allows for the study that can be described simultaneously with descriptive and explanatory parts. Accordingly, the theory in the dissertation is rather connected with a problem that may be mediocre at the end of the thesis (middle-range theory). However, it can be novel to see how successful it is to translate an Eastern concept into the Western rooted IR theory. However, it is important to
emphasize that this will not necessarily be an alloy, but a reinterpretation of an old concept in a Western robe.

3. Results of Dissertation

**H1:** The concept of security studies dominated by Western experts can not always be used to explain China's security because of its different historical past, political organization, and the ever-changing international order.

**Proof:** Starting from the Orientalist soil, we find that our image of the East is largely influenced by the Western socialization medium, which means that we do not realize that we find discrepancies between the states, but that we may find similarities between states. This logic can be discovered within security studies; the discipline wants to use a concept for the security valid for various states around the world, while different theoretical schools also point to different emphasis in their definitions. To reconcile the Chinese security concept as a defensive mechanism of the truncated thought has taken into account historical development and identity search. The triangle of factors, in the context of the state, society and the UN, attempts to define the components influencing foreign policy in the relationship of international institutions that affect China's sense of security. This is not to say that the definitions of different schools need to be abandoned when talking about China, on the contrary: the combination of the realist, liberalist, and constructivist schools should be used, the closest to which is the conception of the Copenhagen school. On this basis, the first sub-hypothesis has been partially proven, avoiding the generalization of states, however, other uses of the term do not always cover novelty.

**H2:** China uses international institutions to enforce its interests by leveraging Western worries.

**Proof:** The Zhongguo pyramid shows China's needs, which are indispensable for total security and new identity. These needs can be supported by multilateral diplomacy; 1) find allies, 2) find the external resources needed to revitalize the economy, and find new markets,
3) participate in the work of an organization, meanwhile increasing its reputation, and open the willingness of other states to cooperate. However, as the pyramid builds up, the power of the state increases, creating fears among international actors. Institutions, however, do not limit the resulting excess, but also restrict it by playing rules, transparency, and creating a common table. The second sub-hypothesis seems to be correct at the international level, but it may raise questions at regional level.

**H3:** In China's foreign policy interests are also in the forefront of values.

**Proof:** One of the best ways of showing Chinese interests is to examine its voting behaviour in the UN Security Council meetings. We collected the rhetorical expressions used by Chinese representatives related to vetoes and abstentions. However, due to the plenty of data, we narrowed our research to Africa and we found that apart from two states (Sudan and Zimbabwe), Chinese rhetorical manifestations were truly commendable to the drafts. However, independence, state sovereignty, territorial integrity, and interference in the state's internal affairs can be regarded as a value in the interest of China, which, if violated, would call into question the very existence of the Chinese state itself. Thus, it is assumed that the third sub-hypothesis is proved, as these are values related to the safety and survival of the state.

**H4:** China is an important regional and international player, but to increase its power to ensure its interests in both arenas, it uses the multilateral framework.

**Proof:** In examining Asia's balance of power, the issue of alliances emerged from China, which would be a pillar of dominance in the region. The lack of this federal net and the fear of the potential allies that Beijing will take over US's position in the region, encourages Beijing to try to defend its interests on a bilateral basis. There are two counter-examples to this, where it uses institutions founded and financed by Beijing, namely Central Asia with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. However, the better protection of its regional position is primarily rooted in its SC position, which can be referred as a privileged place in order to protect its national interest. That is why the SC enlargement proposals, which include India and Japan as new permanent members, are completely unacceptable to China. By contrast, China will support African ambitions to have better voice in the SC, since it increases security in the economic and political sphere, and raises its prestige. This sub-hypothesis is also proven because without its position in the SC, its international and regional influence would be questioned, which would bring the problem
that Beijing should decide what is more important: rivalry or solving internal problems, and ensuring further the state's existence, sinking to the level of the small states.

Due to the full and partial proof of the four sub-hypotheses, our basic assumption is that the complexity of the Chinese state's security and the truncated idea can be simplified to a key factor, which means the survival of the state's current political order and territorial integrity. We assume that Chinese foreign policy is subordinate to domestic politics.

New aspects explored herein include:

- The dissertation links the sciences of international studies, orientalism, China studies, security policy, psychology and history and uses a truly multidisciplinary approach to explain Chinese foreign policy.
- The dissertation gives a new approach to the explanation of China's foreign policy, which can be considered both as a summary and a novel model.
- The triangle of factors can be used to explain foreign policy to other states, but focus shifts need to be taken into account.
- The Zhongguo pyramid explains both the existence of China's development and the concept of Middle Kingdomness with a new frame of reference.
- The dissertation is based on a model used in psychology transposed into IR, starting a new discourse in China studies in Hungary.
- The dissertation is said to be unique among studies written in Hungarian being the only research to summarize and analyse the voting behaviour of China in the UN Security Council.

In addition, this thesis opens up a new direction for research as a first step in a larger research process, which can contribute to the understanding, practical analysis of China's foreign policy and the creation of concrete guidance for decision makers in many ways. Without the utmost exhaustiveness the following can be mentioned:

- The Chinese soft power written in the last chapter of the analysis, is the next step in the Zhongguo pyramid, and as such, a possible starting point for future research.
- The Chinese armaments question the issue of alleviating the security dilemma in international organizations, so it would be appropriate to focus on the status of the Chinese military in the future.
- The dissertation examines Chinese foreign policy on the international stage, but interesting future research may be the analysis of its regional behaviour, especially
the issue of territorial conflicts where the usability of the model outlined in the dissertation is questionable.

• The question of the Asian balance of power would be worth analysing more deeply in future researches where the Triangle of the Factors and the Zhongguo Pyramid are applied in examining the Chinese role in regional institutions.

• Interesting analysis of literature would be the comparison of written reports on the political content of Chinese participation in international institutions published in Chinese and in English.

• Chinese diplomats and composition of Chinese delegation could be a good research subject due to the state’s increased role in the UN.
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