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## **Preface**

The trend towards globalization makes every country connect to each other. The long history of cultural and economic exchanges between China and Southeast Asian countries lead to the special role of China in Southeast Asia. As China has made great progress in economy and politics, it is pursuing common interests through cooperation and trying to initiate new international institutions to participate in the global governance. But the China Threat Theory made by western media and scholars is popular in Southeast Asia, and the ASEAN uses the United States to balance China, which hinders its in-depth cooperation with China. China explains its peaceful rise and express its wills for mutual benefits on the basis of complex interdependence. The divergent views of China's role in Southeast Asia are guided by realism and neoliberal institutionalism.

## **1. Introduction**

The historical interactions between China and Southeast Asian countries as well as the spread of Chinese culture in Southeast Asia have affected the perspectives of these countries on China. This effect first appeared in the Indochina Peninsula, then spread to the Philippines, Indonesia and other Southeast Asian island countries with Zheng He's voyages. Besides, some people went to Southeast Asian countries for living, resulting in overseas Chinese throughout Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia. Before the 19th century, due to its vast territory and strong national strength, China played a dominant role in relations with Southeast Asian countries, shaping the regional order. By the late 19th century, Southeast Asian countries were occupied by Britain, France and other European colonial empires, China also became a semi-colonial country, and the geopolitical influence of China in Southeast Asia had gone.

After World War II, Southeast Asian countries achieved independence. These emerging countries were under the pressure of choosing between capitalism and socialism, facing the internal conflict caused by confrontation of ideology. During 1950s and 1960s, China provided Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos with a full range of military and economic support. Moreover, China participated in the Geneva Conference as one of five great powers to pursue diplomatic resolution of the Indochina issue. In addition, China supported the domestic socialist forces of the Southeast Asian Union (the predecessor of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, including Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand) countries. During this period, China had important

geopolitical influence in Southeast Asia.

The normalization of Sino-US relations in 1970s reversed the geopolitical influence of China in Southeast Asia. The traditional ally - the Indochina Peninsula countries stood on the opposite side of China, while the ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, created by Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia) countries became China's new allies. Another change was that China gave up the export of revolution. In general, during 1970s and 1980s, the geopolitical influence of China in Southeast Asia faced a serious decline.

After the end of the Cold War, the international situation has undergone tremendous changes. Peace and development have become the mainstream of the times. In this international context, China and Southeast Asian countries adjusted their foreign policies to serve economic development. The relations between China and Southeast Asia after the Cold War is divided into two stages. From 1990 to 1997, the relations between China and Southeast Asia was in a period of comprehensive recovery and development. From 1998 to 2009, the relations between China and Southeast Asia entered into a new era of comprehensive development.

From 1990 to 1997, China's relations with Southeast Asia have been fully restored, and China began to promote relations with ASEAN countries, ASEAN as a whole and within the Greater Mekong Subregion. In August 1990, China and Indonesia resumed diplomatic relations. Then Singapore immediately established diplomatic relations with China in October 1990. So did Brunei on September 5, 1991. Sino-Vietnamese relations were normalized in November 1991. So did the relations between China and Laos in

1989. Till 1991, China has established or restored diplomatic relations with all the Southeast Asian countries.

In July 1991, the Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen was invited to attend the opening ceremony of the 24th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting, which was China's first official contact with the ASEAN. In July 1992, China became ASEAN's part dialogue partner. In July 1996, the 6th consultation of the 29th ASEAN Standing Committee was held in Hangzhou, China. In the meeting, China was upgraded from ASEAN's part dialogue partner to full dialogue partner.

Subregional cooperation between China and Southeast Asian countries also started during this period. Since 1992, China has participated in the Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program initiated by the ADB (Asian Development Bank), carrying out extensive cooperation with five ASEAN countries in the Indochina Peninsula (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam) in energy, transportation, investment, environment, communications, tourism, small Business cooperation, poverty alleviation and other fields.

During this period, China's geopolitical influence in Southeast Asia also began to emerge, and the economic relations between the two sides have risen rapidly. According to the ASEAN statistics, from 1993-1997, ASEAN and China's total trade increased from 8865.1 million to 22650.8 million US dollars. However, compared to the United States, the European Union and Japan, this figure only made up a very small proportion of the ASEAN foreign trade volume, only 3.24% in 1997. In the same year, China's

direct investment in the ASEAN accounted for only 0.25% of the total.<sup>1</sup>

The key event that pushed the relations between China and Southeast Asia to a new era of comprehensive development was the Asian Financial Crisis. On July 2, 1997, the Asian Financial Crisis swept through Thailand, resulting in the baht depreciation. Soon after that, the crisis swept through Malaysia, Singapore, Japan, South Korea, China and other places, hindering the rapid development of the Asian economy. The financial crisis led to economic decline in some Asian economies and even political turmoil in some places.

As a result of China's relatively prudent financial policy and a series of measures taken to prevent financial risks in previous years, China didn't suffer direct impact during the Asian Financial Crisis and the financial and economic conditions of China remained stable. To alleviate the Asian financial crisis, the Chinese government has adopted a series of positive policies. China actively participated in the IMF's (International Monetary Fund) assistance to Asian countries. After the outbreak of the financial crisis in 1997, the Chinese government, in the framework organized by the IMF and through bilateral channels, provided Thailand and other countries with an aid of more than 4 billion US dollars, Indonesia and other countries with import and export credit as well as free medical assistance.

At that time, all the countries almost unanimously stated: the Chinese Yuan should be devalued, otherwise the Chinese economy will be a disaster. However, the Chinese government made great efforts to maintain the stability and development of the region

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<sup>1</sup> The ASEAN Secretariat, *ASEAN Statistical Yearbook 2003, 2004*.

in a highly responsible manner. With the export growth declining, domestic demand lacking, unemployment increasing and heavy floods, the Chinese government insisted on not devaluing the Chinese Yuan and paid a great price.

What's more, China actively participated in and promoted regional and international financial cooperation. At the 6th Leaders' Informal Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Chinese President Jiang Zemin put forward three proposals, including strengthening international cooperation to stop the spread of the crisis, reforming the international financial system and respecting the independent choices made by countries and regions to overcome the financial crisis.

While insisting on maintaining the exchange rate of the Chinese Yuan, the Chinese government has made efforts to expand domestic demand and stimulate economic growth. It has maintained the healthy and stable growth of the domestic economy and played an important role in easing the Asian economic tensions and boosting the Asian economic recovery, which established the image of China as a responsible great power and won appreciation of Southeast Asian countries.

In 1997, many Southeast Asian countries suffered heavy losses in the Asian Financial Crisis. The smooth transition of Chinese economy provided important support for financial stability in Southeast Asia. Bilateral economic and trade exchanges have not been greatly affected, which laid the foundation for higher level of economic cooperation. With the deepening of reform and opening up, China achieved rapid economic development. At the same time when China maintained geopolitical influence on Southeast Asia, China's geo-economic influence in Southeast Asia



increased.

Since 1991, the political relations between China and the ASEAN have entered a stage of comprehensive promotion. China and the ASEAN established a complete system of political dialogue and cooperation, including the levels of leaders, ministers and other senior officials. The two sides held 12 leaders' meetings and 3 leaders' special meetings from 1998 to 2009. They also established a number of ministerial meeting mechanisms. Through high-level contacts, mutual trust was enhanced, which laid a good political foundation for the development of bilateral relations. In October 2003, at the 7th China-ASEAN Leaders' Meeting, the two sides established the strategic partnership for peace and prosperity. In the same year, the Chinese government announced its accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia.

In the field of defense, the exchanges and cooperation between China and the ASEAN moved forward through the China-ASEAN Defense Ministers' Informal Meeting, the ASEAN Regional Forum and the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Plus Meeting. For example, China advocated the Security Policy Dialogue in the ASEAN Regional Forum and held the ASEAN plus three (China, Japan, the Republic of Korea) workshop on disaster relief by armed forces. In November 2002, China signed the Declaration on the Conduct of the Parties in the South China Sea with the ASEAN countries, demonstrating the joint commitment of the two sides to strengthen Good-Neighborly Partnership of Mutual Trust and maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea.

The most obvious manifestation of China's geo-economic influence in Southeast

Asia during this period is the framework of economic cooperation established by China and the ASEAN. After the Cold War, the trend of economic globalization and regionalization is obvious. The economic cooperation between China and the ASEAN also followed the trend, breaking the bilateral model.

At the 6th ASEAN-China Leaders' Meeting in Singapore in 2000, China proposed to set up a free trade area with the ASEAN, and the ASEAN agreed to set up a China-ASEAN Expert Group on Economic Cooperation. In 2001, the expert group issued a research paper entitled *Forging Closer ASEAN-China Economic Relations in The Twenty-First Century* and formally proposed the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA). A year later, China and the ASEAN signed the Framework Agreement on China-ASEAN Comprehensive Economic Cooperation. The agreement stipulates China establish ACFTA with five founding countries of the ASEAN and Brunei in 2010, with the other four countries in 2015. The establishment of the free trade area marks a formal regional cooperation mechanism in trade between China and the ASEAN, and the economic cooperation between the two sides has risen to a new level.

A series of regional cooperation framework built by China and the ASEAN enhanced economic exchanges significantly. The volume of trade between China and ASEAN countries increased from 20414.1 million US dollars in 1998 to 19253.3 million in 2008. Before 1998, the trade between China and the ASEAN accounted for only about 2% of the total trade of the ASEAN. But after 1998, the proportion of trade increased noticeably, and in 2008 it had reached 11.26%. In the same year, China became the ASEAN's third largest trading partner, after Japan and the European Union, more than

the United States.<sup>2</sup>

With the continuous growth of China's economy, China plays a more and more important role in offering economic products in the surrounding areas. However, China's rising geo-economic influence doesn't bring geopolitical benefits. On the contrary, Southeast Asian countries are increasingly skeptical about China's intention. Since 2009, China has been the largest trading partner of the ASEAN. Nowadays, China is the largest trading partner of 6 ASEAN countries.<sup>3</sup> Even though China has such close economic ties with Southeast Asia, we could also see Southeast Asian countries' enthusiasm in joining the TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership). The TPP was seen as the strategic tool of the US to return to Asia and balance the influence of China. Singapore and Brunei are the founders of the TPP, then Malaysia and Vietnam actively joined the agreement. It's easy to see their wishes to get rid of dependence on China.

In 2015, China's direct investment in ASEAN increased rapidly, reaching a record high of 14.604 billion US dollars, growing by 87% year on year. By the end of 2015, China had set up more than 3,600 direct investment enterprises in the ASEAN, employing 315,500 employees.<sup>4</sup> Although China has the vision of advancing win-win cooperation with Southeast Asian countries, cooperation projects don't always go well. The most impressive is the suspension of the Myitsone hydropower project. On 30 September 2011, in an address to the parliament, Burma's president Thein Sein announced that the Myitsone Dam project would be halted during the term of his

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<sup>2</sup> The ASEAN Secretariat. *ASEAN Statistical Yearbook 2008, 2009*.

<sup>3</sup> The ASEAN Secretariat. *ASEAN Statistical Yearbook 2015*. 2016.

<sup>4</sup> 中华人民共和国商务部, 中华人民共和国国家统计局, 国家外汇管理局. *2015 年度中国对外直接投资统计公报*. 北京: 中国统计出版社, 2016.

government.<sup>5</sup> Previously, the construction of this project has been recognized by both China and Myanmar, so the loss caused by irresponsible suspension is immeasurable.

China has established different levels of partnership with eight Southeast Asian countries, including: comprehensive strategic partnership of cooperation with Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Thailand, and Myanmar, because China and these Southeast Asian continent countries have comprehensive cooperation not only in politics and diplomacy, but also in economy; comprehensive strategic partnership with Malaysia and Indonesia, without the word cooperation, suggesting that these two Countries have different opinions with China in strategic, political and diplomacy issues, but important and comprehensive strategic value to China. In 2015, during Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Singapore, announced that they will establish an All-Round Cooperative Partnership Progressing with the Times.

Meanwhile, the Philippines is one of the earliest partners of the United States in Asia and strategically the Major non-NATO ally (MNNA) of the United States. In a 2015 poll conducted by the Pew Research Center, 92% of the Filipino people have a favorable view of the United States<sup>6</sup>; 94% of the people have confidence in US President Barack Obama<sup>7</sup>. The MNNAs are close allies designated by the US government that have a strategic partnership with the US military but are not the members of the NATO. In contrast, 2013 and 2014, fewer than half of the Filipino people have a favorable view

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<sup>5</sup> Harvey, Rachel. "Burma dam: Work halted on divisive Myitsone project" in *BBC Website*, 30 Sep (2011) <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-15121801>>

<sup>6</sup> Pew Research Center. "Opinion of the United States" in *Global Indicators Database*. <<http://www.pewglobal.org/database/indicator/1/country/173>>

<sup>7</sup> Pew Research Center. "Confidence in the US President" in *Global Indicators Database*. <<http://www.pewglobal.org/database/indicator/6/country/173>>

of China, 54% in 2015.

In recent years, China has completed several impressive weapon sales, including deals to export three Yuan-class submarines to Thailand and four littoral mission ships to Malaysia. China has also sold tanks to Myanmar, ASCMs to Indonesia. Besides, China began to conduct joint military exercises with Southeast Asian countries. In September 2015, China conducted its first joint military exercise with Malaysia in the Malacca Straits and surrounding waters, covering joint escort, search and rescue, and humanitarian rescue and disaster relief. It was the largest bilateral military exercise between China and an ASEAN country to date.<sup>8</sup> In May 2016, China and Thailand kicked off a joint military exercise code-named "Blue Strike 2016" at Sattahip naval base, the largest naval base in Thailand and the headquarters of the Royal Thai Marine Corps. The Blue Strike began in 2010, which was the first time the Chinese Marine trained with foreign troops. In December 2016, China and Cambodia held a joint military exercise code-named Golden Dragon 2016, which was the first time the two armed forces trained together. A few weeks later, the Cambodian government canceled Cambodia's routine joint military exercises with the United States for the next two years.

Although China and Southeast Asian countries continue to raise military cooperation, most Southeast Asian countries collaborates closely with the United States in the field of military security. In February 2017, the United States held a joint military exercise code-named Cobra Gold with Southeast Asian countries. Cobra Gold is the largest Asia-Pacific military exercise held each year since 1982, of which Indonesia, Malaysia,

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<sup>8</sup> Gill, Bates et al. *The Dynamic of US-China-Southeast Asia Relations*. Sydney: United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney, 2006: 11.

Singapore and Thailand are the members. In 2014, China was also invited to participate, but only in humanitarian relief operations. In November 2016, the United States and Cambodia launched the 6th iteration of the annual Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training Cambodia exercise, which is part of a series of bilateral maritime exercise conducted by the US Navy and nine of its allies in South Asia and Southeast Asia.

More than that, in the past few years, the process of modernization of the armed forces of Southeast Asian countries also attracted attention. The military expenditure of Southeast Asian countries has increased at an average rate of 9% per annum since 2009. For those countries that are committed to the modernization of the armed forces, the concern for the maritime interests is influenced by the geopolitical environment rather than the domestic political considerations and plays a decisive role in arms purchase. The precautions against China have led to the growth of military expenditure in these countries and the escalation of weapons. Not only the number of weapons of the Navy and Air Force in the four major countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam) has increased, but also the iteration is obvious.

China's role in Southeast Asia is quite controversial. In one perspective, China is a threat to the security and development of the region. In the other perspective, China's peaceful rise is possible and will benefit the whole region. So the paradox leaves me a research question: Why do we see such divergent perspectives on China's role in Southeast Asia?

## **2. Methodology**

Conflict and cooperation in the international community have been one of the important themes of international relations theory. From the cold war to present, in the international community, conflict is interweaved with cooperation while the power of the state is interweaved with the international system. On one hand, hegemony and power politics still exist. On the other hand, the degree of interdependence between countries is becoming increasingly close, and international cooperation is becoming more and more popular from the world economy, international cooperation is becoming the most efficient way to pursue national interest. It may not indicate the arrival of the era of international cooperation, but the phenomenon of international cooperation has become the focus of a lot of theorists. In the past decade, international cooperation has been a topic of interest for political scientists, economists and diplomats.

This thesis examines China's role in Southeast Asia. Why China Threat Theory is popular in Southeast Asia? Why strong economic ties cannot transfer to closer relationship? Because there are too many aspects possible to be examined, the focus is on the historical and economic factors. There were some unpleasant memories in the historical interactions between China and Southeast Asia, which hinders the development of relations between the two sides. Nowadays, economic interdependence between the two sides results in complex occasions. Southeast Asian countries and the ASEAN are looking for a way of engaging with China.

Strong economic ties between China and Southeast Asian countries should at first sight result in a friendly behavior towards each other, especially because there are large

numbers of Chinese in Southeast Asia. Yet, despite economic interdependence and cultural resemblances, Southeast Asian countries stick on the strategy of balancing. The relations between China and Southeast Asian countries can be described as “hot economics, cold politics”<sup>9</sup>. In economy, the two sides have large amount of trade and countless cooperation projects. In politics, even though China has established diplomatic relations with all the Southeast Asian countries and have partnership with some of them, Southeast Asian countries are trying to solve territorial disputes through multilateral mechanism like the ASEAN or stick to balance of power and draw support from the United States.

Over the past decades of reform and opening up, China’s comprehensive national strength has been increasing, and China has been playing a pivotal role in the world politics and economy. Many international observers have begun to think about the influence of China’s rise on the world, and China’s status of great power has become a consensus. Examining China’s rise from academic perspectives of international relations to, realism, neo-liberalism, constructivism and other schools of thought have different views.

China’s rise can be explained by three distinct theories of international relations. By looking at China’s transformation in international relations, we can see its adoption of a liberalist paradigm that focuses on absolute gains and economic interdependence. China's embrace of international organizations can be understood through neoliberal institutionalism, which shows China's understanding of global and regional cooperation

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<sup>9</sup> Wong, John. “A China-centric economic order in East Asia” in *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 19 (2013): 286-296.



in the pursuit of common interests and regional stability. The perspective of constructivism allows us to understand how the identity of China shapes its behavior of integrating into the global economy and gain benefits from its integration into international incorporation. Finally, although realism provides a theoretical basis for China Threat Theory, but does not take into account the dominant factor of China's rise - its economy.

The theories that are used to analyze the two-faced relations are realism, neoliberal institutionalism and constructivism. Realists believe China is pursuing power in surrounding areas, because rising powers are bound to challenge the existing system and the ruling power. In an anarchic world, countries compete for interest, and this kind of competition leads to wars. However, in the perspectives of neoliberal institutionalism, China's peaceful rise is feasible and Southeast Asian countries can benefit from China's rise through economic interdependence. More trade reduces the likelihood of a great conflict between countries because it raises the costs of a conflict.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, China initiated the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the One Belt One Road (OBOR) to pursue mutual development and seeks to build China-ASEAN Community of Common Destiny with the ASEAN.

Realism is a relatively pessimistic school of thought, arguing that the potential threat between countries is absolute, and mistrust and noncooperation between countries is inevitable. Since every country sees other countries as its enemies, the competition between countries is inevitable. Realists believe that every country will take serving its

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<sup>10</sup> McMillan, Susan M. "Interdependence and Conflict" in *Mershon International Studies Review*, 41 (1997): 33-58.

own interest as a fundamental principle. The material conditions of a state, that is, economic capacity, advanced technology and natural resources are the decisive factors of international politics. Realists think that whether a country can take control is based on its material conditions. So the appearance of threat is also due to material conditions rather than the ideological factors. Therefore, considering international relations in this school of thought is characterized by the lack of sovereign respect for each other, persistence of relative interests and tendency to use force. In order to avoid war from these competitions, each state should strive for certain rights to form a balance between states, so that it is possible to maintain the stability of the international situation.

Neoliberalism was introduced in the 1980s relative to the prevailing neorealism. Neoliberalism focuses on the interaction between nations under international rules and emphasizes the role of international cooperation. States need to share the benefits of cooperation and reciprocity under the constraints of the international system. Liberalism argues that the interdependence of economy between countries brought about by international trade reduces the likelihood of using force to resolve conflicts and other disputes. Since cooperation is a collective action, countries that choose to cooperate face the risk of “free riding” behavior or even other worse risks. In this way, when there are no international institutions to prevent the free riding, the opportunity will be gone, which is the major role played by international institutions for neoliberalism: to prevent cheating.

The first section of this thesis introduces the background of China’s role in Southeast Asia and poses the research question. The next chapter will cover the theoretical

framework. The main elements of realism and neoliberal institutionalism will be explained in the third chapter by making a comparative research. After this chapter, the reasons why there exist such divergent perspectives on China's role in Southeast Asia are examined in depth by answering the following sub question: what makes some of Southeast Asian countries worry about China's rise? This part will focus on the historical background of China Threat Theory and historical reasons for precaution against China. The other part of this chapter will elaborate on the question: why is China's peaceful rise possible? The chapter of conclusion will answer the questions posed. And the last chapter will be limitation.

### **3. Theory**

#### **3.1. Realism**

Among the many schools of contemporary international relations theory, realism which is rooted in human nature, power and interest are the most important theoretical sources of China Threat Theory, including Hobbesian, classical realism, offensive realism, power transition theory and so on. These theories focus on the changes of power in international relations and the resulting processes and laws of international relations and changes in international systems. The main idea of realism is that the international community is in an anarchy and lacks the highest authority to maintain an order similar to the domestic one. Therefore, the state can only ensure the survival and development of their own through the self-help. In all the factors of national survival and development, power is the most important factor, which directly reflects the country's dependence and means of survival and development and determines the position and influence of a country in international relations. Due to the uneven growth of power between countries, the rise of emerging powers will often undermine the existing balance of power, causing competition or even wars between the emerging state and the ruling power, thus endangering the stability of the entire international system. The theory argues that “when dissatisfied countries think that they have the opportunity to win the order dominance through war, they will not hesitate to change the status quo through war.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Organski, A. F. K. *World Politics*. New York: Alfred A, 1968: 123.

China Threat Theory is mainly embodied in China's military threat and China's economic threat. It comes directly from two factors, namely, Hobbesian and classical realism theory.

The first is based on the Hobbes' view of human nature. Similar to the idea "Humanity is evil" advocated by the ancient Chinese philosopher Xunzi, the important branch of Western political philosophy - Hobbesian also holds this view. In Hobbes' view, human beings are born selfish. The relationship between people is fundamentally competition for survival, just like the "law of the jungle". In order to compete for limited resources and living space, people are always in the fierce competition for survival, in another word, in the war of all against all. If we magnify the relationship between people into the relations between nations, the basic idea of "selfish human nature" can still be applied. The master of international relations – Hans Morgenthau believes that the amplification of individual rights will be the power of states, and this nature will be more prominent.

Followed by the classical realism based on "struggle for power". As the earliest, the most widely spread, the most far-reaching theoretical paradigm of international relations, realism constitute an important branch of international relations theory with its direct and concise description and strong explanatory power. From classical realism of Hans Morgenthau in 1948 to offensive realism of Mearsheimer, realism has evolved classical realism, structural realism, offensive (defensive) realism, etc.

Although these theoretical schools are not consistent in many points of view, they all have an important conceptual basis, that is, the emphasis on power and its impact on

international relations. Therefore, this theoretical paradigm is also known as the “power politics”.

The realist schools based on power can be traced back to the ancient Greek period. As early as 2000 years ago, the ancient Greek historian Thucydides put forward the idea of “power politics” in the book *Peloponnesian War*. He believes that the roots of the Peloponnesian war is Spartak concerns and fears about the growth of the Athens Group. The famous Italian thinker Machiavelli also discussed the issue of power between countries in his famous *Monarch*. The British political philosopher of 16<sup>th</sup> Century - Hobbes defined “power politics” as the basis of relations between nations in the book *Leviathan*. Although these writings present some concepts and basic views of power politics from various aspects and perspectives, they have not given an exact definition and systematic theoretical system. It was not until 1948 that American scholar Morgenthau first made a theoretical definition and systematic exposition in his book *Politics Among Nations*, thus laying the foundations of realism in international relations theories. In Morgenthau's view, “Whatever the ultimate aims of international politics, power is always the immediate aim”<sup>12</sup>. In short, in the classical realists’ view, the characteristics of international politics is struggle for power, not only because of the logic of struggle for power in competitive domains such as world politics, but also because “the struggle for power is universal in time and space and is an undeniable fact of experience”<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Morgenthau, Hans & Thompson, Kenneth. *Politics Among Nations*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985: 29.

<sup>13</sup> Morgenthau, Hans & Thompson, Kenneth. *Politics Among Nations*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985: 29.

As an important branch of realism, offensive realism has undoubtedly occupied an important position in international relations theories after the Cold War. The idea in Mearsheimer's *The Tragedy of the Great Power Politics* is the most typical of this paradigm, that is, in an anarchic world, no country is the so-called "state of status quo". In order to survive and develop, states will constantly pursue power maximization, and fierce competition between major powers is inevitable. Ultimately it will lead to conflict or even war.

Offensive realism is a kind of structural realism. It makes five assumptions: the international system is anarchic; great powers inherently possess some offensive military capability, and accordingly can damage each other; states can never be certain about other states' intentions; survival is the primary goal of great powers; and great powers are rational actors.<sup>14</sup> Because the international system is anarchic, no country can count on the international community to have a supreme authority to provide security assurance for their survival and development, so great powers are "concerned mainly with figuring out how to survive in a world where there is no agency to protect them from each other"<sup>15</sup>. Generally speaking, there are three modes of behavior of the great powers: fear, self-help and power maximization, "the best guarantee of survival is to be a hegemon"<sup>16</sup>. The state's intention is unreliable. Indeed, what determine the behavior of states is power or strength. No country is the status quo state, every country is bound to change the status quo and establish an

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<sup>14</sup> Mearsheimer, J. J. *The tragedy of great power politics*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001: 23-29.

<sup>15</sup> Mearsheimer, J. J. *The tragedy of great power politics*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001: 11.

<sup>16</sup> Mearsheimer, J. J. *The tragedy of great power politics*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001: 16.

international order which benefits itself with increasing national strength. Because of “the stopping power of water”, “no state is likely to achieve global hegemony, however, the world is condemned to perpetual great-power competition”<sup>17</sup>. “The sad fact is that international politics has always been a ruthless and dangerous business, and it is likely to remain that way.”<sup>18</sup> According to the type and stability level of the international system, Mearsheimer believes that the structure of international system can be classified into three modes: bipolar structure, balanced multipole and unbalanced multi-pole structure, of which the stability level decreases in turn.

The author of the power transition theory is A. F. K Organski, a political science professor at the University of Michigan, USA. The main point of this theory is that in the international anarchic society, the power relations among nations is an important branch of international relations, which determine the international status and behavior of a country. After all, the stability of the international system is determined by the power distribution in the existing international system. As a result of the unbalanced growth of power, the rise of emerging powers will undermine the stability of the international system.

The main content of the theory has three aspects. First, power is the most important feature of relations between nations. Organski's basic view is very similar to the “power politics” of Morgenthau's classical realism. Organski defines power as “the

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<sup>17</sup> Mearsheimer, J. J. *The tragedy of great power politics*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001: 15.

<sup>18</sup> Mearsheimer, J. J. *The tragedy of great power politics*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001: 14.



ability of a nation to influence the behavior of others in accordance with its own ends”<sup>19</sup>.

Second, power transition is the root of the instability of the international system. Organski argues that the stability of the international system is ultimately determined by the power distribution of nations in the existing international system. He researched into the relationship between power and satisfaction of domestic and international system, and argued that, the international system can maintain a relatively stable state only if the various actors in the international system are satisfied with the power distribution in the system and maintain sufficient satisfaction. Accordingly, Organski describes an ideal structure of international power distribution, that is, a superpower living in the top, other countries in the lower and the bottom of the pyramid structure. Because the power of the top and bottom of are incommensurable, the key to maintaining the stability of the whole structure is to give different actors the appropriate satisfaction, that is, to maintain the appropriate balance between power and satisfaction.

Third, another key to maintaining the stability of the international system is to maintain the dominant position of the Western world. One of the basic assumptions of structural realism is that the balance of power is a key factor in maintaining the peace of an international system. But, unlike the typical structural realists, Organski does not believe that the balance of power can maintain peace, and that the balance of power leads to the maintenance of long-term peace in the history of international

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<sup>19</sup> Organski, A. F. K. & Kugler, Jacek. *The War Ledger*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

relations is considered as an exception rather than a rule. Because the state will not easily wage war, unless it is sure of win. The gap between the power of the states will make the potential invaders discouraged, and the outbreak of war between countries is often due to the proximity of power - that is usually described balance of power. On the contrary, he believes that “the balance of power is more likely to lead to war”<sup>20</sup>.

### **3.2. Neoliberal Institutionalism**

In 1977, the book *Power and Interdependence* co-authored by O. Keohane and Nye, for the first time, constructed the theoretical foundation of neoliberal institutionalism with the ideal model of complex interdependence. After seven years, the book *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* wrote by O. Keohane was published, of which the international institutional theory was named neoliberalism or neoliberal institutionalism by some scholars. In order to construct a highly simple and scientific theoretical system, O. keohane defined the international instituion as the basic characteristic in the international system and defined the state as the main actors of the international system. Thus, his neoliberal institutionalism consists of two basic variables: international institution and state behavior. In the anarchic world, the international institution affects the state behavior.

The basic ideas of neoliberal institutionalism includes: First, neoliberal institutionalism is developing and established in criticizing neorealism. It recognizes several basic assumptions of neorealism about international politics, but it comes to a

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<sup>20</sup> Organski, A. F. K. & Kugler, Jacek. *The War Ledger*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

different conclusion from neorealism, which is that the essence of international relations is cooperation rather than conflict. On one hand, neoliberal institutionalism agrees that the state is the main actor of international relations. The non-state actors are subject to the states. It admits that the state is selfish and self-interested, but the nature of selfishness does not necessarily lead to conflicts. On the contrary, selfish countries take into account their respective comparative advantages and are likely to adopt strategies for reciprocal cooperation. On the other hand, the scholars examine international politics from the assumption of the anarchy of the international system. But unlike neorealists, they argue that anarchy does not mean disorder and does not necessarily lead to conflicts and chaos, and that the international community can be an anarchic but orderly society. In order to avoid falling into the Hobbesian condition of “all people against all” described by neorealism, the international community needs to establish an international order to rationally resolve international conflicts and get the greatest interests at the minimum cost by the means of establishing international institutions to promote international cooperation.

Second, interdependence is the logical starting point of neoliberal institutionalism. “Interdependence” is a very popular concept in the 1960s and 1970s. O. Keohane and Nye point out that interdependence in world politics refers to the interplay between states or between actors of different countries. Interdependence depends on the coercion or the interaction that requires paying the price; its meaning is not limited to the situation of mutual benefit, not characterized by mutual benefit; interdependence

does not always lead to cooperation, and it will not automatically achieve peace.<sup>21</sup> In the book *Power and Interdependence*, they put forward the “complex interdependence” model, linking power to interdependence. They point out that asymmetric interdependence is also a resource and use “sensitivity” and “vulnerability” to make in-depth discussion.

By elaborating the core concept of “complex interdependence”, O. Keohane and Nye connected the concepts of power, interdependence, transnationalism and international mechanism. Taking the interdependence as the logical starting point, they discussed the change of international mechanism, which provides a theoretical basis for the construction of neoliberal institutionalism. Through the discussion of globalism and global governance, the new liberal institutionalism has been further developed.

Third, the thoughts on the creation of international institutions and their function. They accepted the central realist premise that state behavior is rooted in power and interest. In addition, they used the intellectual tools of conflict analysis such as game theory and derived a self-interested basis for the existence of international institutions.<sup>22</sup> As explained in the game theory, more specifically Prisoners dilemma, states seek to maximize individual pay-offs, and so institutions offer a platform

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<sup>21</sup> Keohane, R. O. & Nye, J. S. *Power and interdependence: World politics in transition*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1977.

<sup>22</sup> Stein, Arthur A. “Neoliberal Institutionalism” in *The Oxford Handbook on International Relations*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008: 201-221.

through which greater coordination and cooperation can be executed, subsequently benefitting both parties.<sup>23</sup>

In terms of the relationship between the international system and the state, the international regime limits or expands the scope and space of action of states in international relations. The international system, once produced, will have a lasting functional value, having a certain role in states' external behavior and even domestic behavior. That is to say, the international institutions are mainly created by states, but this does not mean that the international institutions cannot react to the behavior of the state; institutions not only reflect power and preferences of the main actors that constitute the institution, but also will affect the power and preferences of these actors.

Fourth, it also absorbs the game theory, rational choice and other new research methods, so that the theoretical analysis becomes more rigorous and practical. The core of neoliberal institutionalism is a hypothesis of individual behavior and attitudes, which regards the state as an economic person with a "bounded rationality" in neoclassical economic theory. The "bounded rationality" of states further points out that the rationality of state behaviors does not mean that the behaviors of states are always aimed at maximizing the pursuit of interests. In the process of pursuing the maximization of interests, the state faces the "opportunity cost", outside uncertainty and information asymmetry. Therefore, rational individuals can never obtain the

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<sup>23</sup> Whyte, Alexander. "Neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism: born of the same approach?" in *E-International Relations* 11 Jun (2012) <<http://www.e-ir.info/2012/06/11/neorealism-andneoliberal-institutionalism-born-of-the-same-approach/>>

maximization of their own interests, it can only be subject to the external environment constraints under the limited conditions to pursue the “self-satisfaction”. In the international politics, the neoliberal institutionalism, which is based on rational choice and game theory as the basic analysis tool, generally has the following three characteristics: First, states or other actors are the basic analysis unit. As a rational individual, they can make their own choice to achieve the maximum net income in accordance with the effectiveness of the individual function. Second, this theory holds that individual preferences always exist. Individuals are considered to be able to compare the choice, to find the possibility of substitution, and can make marginal adjustment. Third, the emphasis on accuracy, and sometimes also stressed the formality, the result is that the proposition of its research at least can withstand economic and political measurement of the test in theory.

In short, The basic idea of the new liberal institutionalism are: First, the international community is anarchic, but the international community is not disorderly and has a certain form of organizations and rules; Second, the state is a selfish, rational actor, its purpose is to pursue absolute gains; Third, there is a conflict of interests between countries, but countries seek cooperation for their own interests, so mutual cooperation is the result of the game between countries; Fourth, for the purpose of achieving absolute gains, the state seeks an effective mechanism for the state to abandon its own Pareto dominate the strategy, and get the best results of the collective. The international institution is an effective way to ensure international cooperation.

## 4. Analysis

### 4.1. Reasons for Southeast Asian countries' worries about China's rise

The theory of Yellow Peril was once popular among western countries, but the source of threat is not only from China, but also from Japan, and more due to the fear of Mongols. Later, the main enemy of western countries is the former Soviet Union. As a member of the socialist camp, China is alerted by western countries. After the Cold War, the China Threat Theory soon became popular.

In August 1990, a professor at Japan's National Defense Academy, Tomohide Murai, wrote an article about China as a potential threat in the May 1990 *Shokun* magazine,<sup>24</sup> but the article did not cause the public attention at that time. Since 1992, some news media, scholars and even political leaders of the United States and other western countries, have begun to express concern about the rise of China's national strength and promote the China Threat Theory from various angles, on various occasions. In 1995, James Hackett, wrote in an article *Between Dragon and Wrath*: "Four years after the collapse of the Soviet Union a new evil empire is emerging. Its name: China."<sup>25</sup> The director of Asia Project at the Philadelphia Foreign Policy Institute, Ross Munro, wrote the article *Awakening Dragon: The Real Danger in Asia Is Coming from China*. At that time, China Threat Theory swept the eastern coast of the Pacific Ocean. In February 1997, Ross Munro and Richard Bernstein, the first journalist of the Times magazine in Beijing, published the book *The Coming Conflict with China*. The two authors thought

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<sup>24</sup> Rozman, Gilbert et al. *Japanese strategic thought toward Asia*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007: 166.

<sup>25</sup> Hackett, James. "Between dragon and wrath" in *Washington Times* (1995).

that after becoming the world's leading force in the next century, China would be a long-term enemy rather than a strategic partner of the United States, and predicted that the conflict between China and the United States could lead to war, so they suggested take the most stringent containment strategy towards China. This viewpoint represents the basic argument of China Threat Theory.

These ideas of western media soon attracted response in Asia. On August 12 1992, the *Asahi Shimbun* of Japan asserted that China was becoming a destabilizing factor of destroying the balance in Asia. In May 1993, when meeting with the US President Bill Clinton, Japanese Prime Minister Miyazawa said that once Chinese economy was developed, China would be ambitious in military. Southeast Asian countries have conflicts of interest with China in history, territory and ideology, so the China Threat Theory was once popular in Southeast Asia. In October 1995, the Philippine President Ramos declared that China was the number one threat in East Asia. Philippine military leaders even claimed that China was like infectious disease in South China Sea, we must develop enough antibodies to prevent its infection. Moreover, India and other countries played a role in fueling the spread of the China Threat Theory for their own political needs.

With the development of China, Southeast Asia, there have been different versions of China Threat Theory. They are not the same in different periods.

In politics, first, the ASEAN countries worry that China will take the expansion strategy after getting strong. After the end of the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union withdrew from the region, Southeast Asian countries fear that China will



expand forces in the region. Western scholars and media predict that China will fill the strategic vacuum area of Southeast Asia. “Filling the vacuum” is the earliest version of China Threat Theory that appeared in the region after the Cold War. In the late 1990s, especially after the 1997 Asian financial crisis, some ASEAN countries feared that the rising China would compete with Japan and the United States for dominance in the region, causing tension in the region. Some extreme views even believe that China will practice the Chinese version of “Monroe Doctrine” in the region. In addition, the ASEAN advocated and led the East Asian cooperation process after the financial crisis, and China actively respond. As China's influence in East Asia is increasing, the ASEAN is also worried that China will gradually replace its dominance in East Asian cooperation. Today, a new version of China Threat Theory emerged in Southeast Asia. The elites in Southeast Asia are more inclined to believe that with China’s rise and the rise of nationalist sentiment, China may change the good neighborly policy, instead, seeking regional hegemony. Some remarks even believe that China is recovering the tributary system in history.

Second, the ASEAN countries worry that China will solve the South China Sea dispute by force. China and some ASEAN countries have sovereignty disputes in the South China Sea, and in the 20th century, there have been small-scale military conflicts. The South China Sea dispute is also the last unresolved problem between China and some Southeast Asian countries. But China put forward the principle of putting aside disputes and engaging in joint exploitation, which was gradually accepted by the ASEAN countries. But with the strengthening of China's military strength, especially

the strengthening of the Chinese Navy, some sovereignty claimants are worried that China will solve the South China Sea dispute by force when China is ready.

Third, the ASEAN countries are worried about China's strategic direction on the Taiwan issue. The ASEAN countries support the One China principle, but prefer to see that the two sides maintain the status quo. They fear that if China solve the Taiwan issue by force, ASEAN countries will face difficulties in making choices between China and the United States, thus completely damaging the stability and peace of the region. In addition, even if China's peaceful reunification, the ASEAN countries are also worried about facing a stronger China. With the deepening of the fear, they get closer to the United States to balance China's strategy.

The ASEAN countries worry about China strategically mainly because: First, China's long-term strategic choice is still uncertain. Indonesian senior expert of international issues, Jusuf Wanandi thinks, China's future strategy is uncertain, China grew up too fast in a short period, the ASEAN countries have not adapted yet. Second, the ASEAN countries are susceptible to western opinions. The officials, scholars and the media of western countries consider from the realist perspectives that the rising China is bound to compete with the United States for the dominance of the region and compete with Japan for the initiative of cooperation in East Asia.

In economy, first, the ASEAN countries worry about China occupying the international market and taking away foreign investment. The export goods of China are almost of the same category as those of some ASEAN countries, especially in the manufacturing sector, squeezing some of the international markets for Southeast Asian

countries. After the Asian financial crisis in 1997, the investment environment is worse than that of China. The number of foreign capital inflows in China is obviously higher than that of the ASEAN countries. Since the ACFTA was negotiated in depth and gradually implemented, most ASEAN countries worry that China's cheap manufactured goods will impact the domestic manufacturing and small and medium enterprises of their own.

Second, the ASEAN countries worry about China plundering resources in Southeast Asia. Some experts and industries of Indonesia, Myanmar and other countries argue that China's predatory exploitation of resources in Southeast Asian countries, in the long run, will gradually make these countries become China's energy and resource supply.

Manufacturing goods in China is now only 4 percent cheaper than in the United States, in large part because yearly average manufacturing wages in China have increased by 80 percent since 2010. It is in response to this that China, backed by billions of dollars in investment from its government, has vigorously moved into higher value manufacturing.<sup>26</sup> So China today is not the competitor of Southeast Asian countries in many sectors. Moreover, Chinese enterprises are making investment in Southeast Asia. With One Belt One Road, China is going to cooperate with Southeast Asian countries in many aspects. Southeast Asian countries should not see it as a threat, instead, the cooperation with China will undoubtedly push the economy of their own.

The development of China needs resources from overseas, but the input of resource

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<sup>26</sup> Lomas, Matthias. "Which Asian Country Will Replace China as the 'World's Factory'?" in *The Diplomat*, 18 Feb 2017 < <http://thediplomat.com/2017/02/which-asian-country-will-replace-china-as-the-worlds-factory/>>

or exploitation of resources in Southeast Asian countries is not pillage. Many Chinese enterprises set up companies or factories in Southeast Asia, which not only stimulates the local economy but also promotes the employment. In order to support the infrastructure construction in developing Asian countries, China established the AIIB to provide help.

In ecology, this argument is mainly manifested in the development of the Mekong River. The upper reaches of the Mekong River is in China's Yunnan Province, namely the Lancang River; the middle and lower reaches flows through Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam. The five countries believe that hydropower projects of China in the upper reaches of will cause floods or drought for the middle and lower reaches. Some governments have even blamed China for the drought caused by the lack of rainfall. Even the Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen that used to be friendly to China has warned that the development of the upper reaches diminishes the number of fishes in the Tonle Sap Lake and the lake Cambodia relies on will dry up. The report of the Mekong River Commission emphasizes that the fragile ecosystem of the Mekong River is worsening and that if the current rate of damage is maintained, forest cover, biodiversity, fish and soil quality will be difficult to recover in the short term. The secretary general of the commission stresses that the development policy of a country for resolving poverty can seriously hurt the ecological environment of neighboring countries and aggravate the poverty of the victim countries. The report of the US National Intelligence Council predicts that the upstream development of China may lead to tensions with the downstream countries. Through trend of global green politics,

non-governmental organizations and academic institutions funded by western countries emphasizes the negative effects and ecological disasters of the development of the Mekong River, urging the government to reassess the environmental, social, economic and security effects of the development of the Mekong River and obstructing the cooperation between China and these countries. At present, there are more than 600 non-governmental organizations are supported by western countries only in Laos, Cambodian, Thailand and Vietnam.

In short, the China Threat Theory has negative impact on China-ASEAN relations. On one hand, it leads to political distrust between China and the ASEAN countries. On the other hand, it leads the ASEAN to adopt a more active strategy of balancing to contain China. Moreover, the China Threat Theory also leads to lack of cooperation in the field of security between China and the ASEAN.

On January 22 2014, the *World Post* of the United States published an exclusive interview with Chinese President Xi Jinping, where Xi specifically talked about dealing with the relations between great powers, saying that we should try to avoid falling into the Thucydides Trap. The so-called Thucydides Trap is a statement made by an ancient Greek historian Thucydides in the elaboration of the war between Athens and Spartan in the 5th century BC. In that year, the war between the two countries broke out and lasted for 30 years, which led to the destruction of both. Thucydides concludes that the inevitable cause of war is the rise of Athens, and the fear of Sparta. Graham Allison, a professor at the Harvard University, explained that the rise of Athens caused fear in Sparta, so Athens should be responsible for the war.

In other words, a rising power is bound to challenge the ruling power, and the ruling power is bound to respond to this threat, so that the war becomes inevitable. This has almost been regarded as the “iron law” of international relations. Since 1500, there have been fifteen cases of a rising power challenging the ruling power, of which eleven led to war. The most significant is the case of Germany. After the reunification of Germany, it replaced Britain as the largest economy in Europe. In 1914 and 1939, the German aggression and the British reaction led to two world wars. There are similar cases in Asia. After the rise of Japan, Japan wanted to challenge the order established or being established by the European colonies in Asia and establish the Japanese-centered Asian order, which finally caused the war of Japan aggression of Japan in other Asian countries in the name of against the western powers.

Some western scholars have a set of logic that the rising powers are bound to be a hegemon. The representative of this view is the professor at the University of Chicago and the famous hawkish scholar in the field of political science and international relations, John Mearsheimer. In his book *The Tragedy of the Great Power Politics*, he argues that in anarchic world, no country is the so-called “status quo state”, and the country will continue to pursue the maximum of power in order to survive and develop. The security competition is inevitable, and ultimately will lead to conflict or even war. On the basis of a detailed analysis and summary of the cases in history, Mearsheimer made a bold prediction that the rich and strong China would not be a great power to maintain the status quo but an ambitious state determined to gain the regional hegemony. This is not because the rich China will have bad motives, but because for any country,

the best way to maximize the chance of survival is to become the hegemon of the region.

According to this logic, John Mearsheimer's conclusion is: "What makes a future Chinese threat so worrisome is that it might be far more powerful and dangerous than any of the potential hegemonies that the United States confronted in the twentieth century. Neither Wilhelmine Germany, nor imperial Japan, nor Nazi Germany, nor the Soviet Union had nearly as much latent power as the United States had during their confrontations. But if China were to become a giant Hong Kong, it would probably have somewhere on the order of four times as much latent power as the United States does, allowing China to gain a decisive military advantage over the United States in Northeast Asia."<sup>27</sup> "One of the key foreign policy issues facing the United States is the question of how China will behave if its rapid economic growth continues and effectively turns China into a giant Hong Kong. Many Americans believe that if China is democratic and enmeshed in the global capitalist system, it will not act aggressively; instead it will be content with the status quo in Northeast Asia." Mearsheimer wrote, "According to this logic, the United States should engage China in order to promote the latter's integration into the world economy, a policy that also seeks to encourage China's transition to democracy. If engagement succeeds, the United States can work with a wealthy and democratic China to promote peace around the globe."<sup>28</sup> But Mearsheimer does not agree with this optimistic idea. He said: "Unfortunately, a policy of engagement is doomed to fail. If China becomes an economic powerhouse it will almost certainly translate its economic might into military might and make a run at

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<sup>27</sup> Mearsheimer, J. J. *The tragedy of great power politics*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001: 569.

<sup>28</sup> Mearsheimer, J. J. *The tragedy of great power politics*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001: 16.

dominating Northeast Asia. Whether China is democratic and deeply enmeshed in the global economy or autocratic and autarkic will have little effect on its behavior, because democracies care about security as much as non-democracies do, and hegemony is the best way for any state to guarantee its own survival.”<sup>29</sup>

Mearsheimer has repeatedly reminded Americans to contain China: First, “do whatever we could to slow down China’s economic growth”. Second, he believes that it is more effective “to pursue a containment strategy similar to the one that we pursued with the Soviet Union during the Cold War”. “It makes much more sense for the United States just to work with China’s neighbors to try and contain it and to prevent it from becoming a regional hegemon.”<sup>30</sup> After Russia sent troops to Ukraine and the Crimea public voted to join Russia, Mearsheimer wrote in the *New York Times*, pointing out that the United States should not waste energy on the Ukrainian issue with Russia, “because the United States needs Moscow’s help to deal with Iran, Syria, Afghanistan, and eventually to help counter China, the only genuine potential rival to the United States”<sup>31</sup>. Richard Bernstein and Ross Mango hold a similar view, they think: “driven by nationalist sentiment, a yearning to redeem the humiliations of the past, and the simple urge for international power, China is seeking to replace the United States as the dominant power in Asia”<sup>32</sup>.

The evaluation of a country is the same as the evaluation of a person, which is

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<sup>29</sup> Mearsheimer, J. J. *The tragedy of great power politics*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001: 17.

<sup>30</sup> Navarro, Peter. “Mearsheimer on Strangling China & the Inevitability of War” in *Huffington Post Website*, 3 Oct (2016) <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-navarro-and-greg-autry/mearsheimer-on-strangling\\_b\\_9417476.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-navarro-and-greg-autry/mearsheimer-on-strangling_b_9417476.html)>

<sup>31</sup> Mearsheimer, J. J. “Getting Ukraine Wrong” in *The New York Times Website*, 13 Mar (2014) <[https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/14/opinion/getting-ukraine-wrong.html?\\_r=1](https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/14/opinion/getting-ukraine-wrong.html?_r=1)>

<sup>32</sup> Bernstein, Richard & Munro, Ross H. *The coming conflict with America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997: 18-19.



constructed in the process of mutual interaction between different subjects. On one hand, as a subject, China itself is constantly changing. Different governance and different foreign policies will largely affect the evaluation from others. On the other hand, the evaluation subjects are also in change, their concerns, interests and values will lead to different feelings of the objects. Whether it is the theory of Yellow Peril or China threat Theory, or China's Peaceful Rise, it is the normal reaction of interactions between the subjects.

The emergence of China Threat Theory is mainly due to misunderstanding of China. On one hand, there are significant differences between China and western countries in ideology, cultural tradition, idea of human rights and religious belief, and the export of revolution leaves fear in Southeast Asia. On the other hand, China lacks strategy of spreading and explaining its ideas of peace, justice and equality in the international interactions.

Besides the influence of China Threat Theory, historical factors breed fear of China in Southeast Asia. From the founding of the People's Republic of China to 1970s, China provided ideological, economic and military assistance to the communist armed groups in Thailand, Malaysia, Myanmar, Indonesia and the Philippines to support their revolution in their own countries.

At the beginning of 1960s, the Malayan Communist Party entered into a low tide period, and its troops were besieged by government forces, leaving only a few hundred people in Malaya (formerly known as the western land of Malaysia) and the Thai border area. The Chen ping, general secretary of the Malayan Communist Party, came to China

to meet Deng Xiaoping in 1961. Deng suggested use the experience of the Communist Party of Vietnam to launch the second revolutionary propaganda in Malaya and assured him 100,000 US dollars of assistance. With the support of China, after several years of preparation, Malayan Communist Party launched a second armed uprising in 1968 and established the Voice of Malayan Revolution as only official channel of propaganda in Hunan Province, China in the following year. In addition, the Communist Party of Thailand was also supported by the Chinese government, and set up the Voice of the People of Thailand in Yunnan Province, China.

In 1965, the Indonesian president Sukarno leaned to the communist camp, while the Indonesian army had close relationship with the United States. This conflict broke out when Sukarno was badly ill, the Indonesian Communist Party staged a coup d'état. Then the Armed Force and Strategic Reserve commander Suharto launched a counterattack. After the incident, Suharto instigated anti-Communist cleansing throughout the country. The Suharto military government affirmed that China supported the coup in Indonesia, so besides the killing of Communist Party members, a large number of Chinese were also slaughtered.

On July 21 2016, an international panel of judges has concluded that Indonesia's mass killings of 1965 were crimes against humanity, and that the United States, United Kingdom and Australia were all complicit in the crimes.

Due this unpleasant historical memory, there has been such a view in Southeast Asia: taking into account China's land area and the history of taking Southeast Asia as their own sphere of influence, China will always pose a threat to Southeast Asia.

## **4.2. Reasons for peaceful rise of China**

After the end of the Cold War, the relations between China and the ASEAN continued to develop. After entering the new century, the two sides announced the establishment of “strategic partnership for peace and prosperity”. In recent years, despite the South China Sea dispute between China and some ASEAN countries, the relations between China and the ASEAN continues to move forward.

On the basis of deepening interactions between China and the ASEAN, the common interests of the two sides gradually increased, which makes the interests of both sides integrated to form a mutual dependence. Among these common interests, the economic interests are the most important. Thus, economic cooperation plays a leading role in relations between the two sides, and military security issues correspondingly decline. The interdependence in economic and other aspects makes the costs of solving disputes between the two sides by force often more than the benefits, so that the conflict will be constrained, the role of military power also declined. Despite the existence of the South China Sea dispute, and sometimes the situation is very intense, but the two sides are trying to avoid the confrontation. On the contrary, cooperation has become the common aspirations of both sides. To this end, the leaders of China and ASEAN countries visit each other frequently and cooperation in economy and education are promoted, which jointly promotes the relations between the two sides forward, which in turn leads to further mutual dependence on each other.

There are also some differences and disputes between China and the ASEAN. If not

handled properly, it will affect the friendly relationship and regional stability. Constraining behaviors of both sides through international institutions can avoid intensifying these differences and disputes. For example, to deal with the China Threat Theory, China put forward the policy of “good, safe and rich neighbors” and joined the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, thereby reducing the worries and doubts of the ASEAN countries on China's rise. China and the ASEAN established a series of international institutions, not only to control and reduce differences and disputes, but also to protect and promote the cooperation between the two sides. For example, at the informal meeting of the leaders of the China-ASEAN government, the two sides made the decision to establish the ACFTA, signed the Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation between China and the ASEAN, and announced the establishment of the strategic partnership for peace and prosperity. In addition, the signing of the Joint Declaration of ASEAN and China on Cooperation in the Field of Non-Traditional Security Issues has strengthened cooperation between the two sides in non-traditional security. With the further improvement and deepening of the cooperation mechanism between China and the ASEAN, the cooperation between the two sides will be further strengthened.

East Asia is in typical anarchy. In order to maintain the survival and security, all countries are strengthening their power, resulting in all kinds of disputes. These are potential factors that threaten regional peace and stability, but there is no effective cooperation mechanism in East Asia. But this anarchy is not irreversible. With the increase in mutual exchanges, the interdependence between countries has deepened,

which has made every country try to avoid force, instead, inclined to resolve disputes through dialogue and negotiation. With the gradual strengthening and perfection of the international institutions in East Asia, this has led to a reduction in arbitrariness, thereby reducing the threats to regional peace. At the same time, these international institutions safeguard and promote cooperation and further enhance interdependence. It is believed that the deepening of economic integration between China and the ASEAN will certainly affect the political arrangements of countries, so that the anarchy of current East Asian region will be greatly improved.

The proposal and advocacy of China's new security concept shows the adjustment of China's foreign policy and indicates the important trend of China's future foreign policy. In 1997, the Chinese leader formally put forward the new security concept, saying that the traditional realist concept of security and its use, will only create a security dilemma, it is necessary to "establish a new universal sense of security". China believes that the national security has undergone new changes in the times of globalization. Therefore, China has abandoned the narrow concept of military security, and gradually established the "comprehensive security concept". According to the new security concept, besides political security and military security, there are economic security, environmental security, cultural security, social security and a series new security issues, which requires international cooperation to deal with the common threats facing mankind. China advocates "cooperative security". The main feature of this new model of international security relations is to replace suspicion with trust, to replace confrontation with dialogue, to replace conflicts with peaceful negotiations, to replace

contention with understanding. Promoting international cooperation in security is the basic trend of China's diplomacy.

Changes in China's internal affairs also indicate the trend of peace and cooperation in China's diplomacy. Considering the characteristics of the Chinese nation, especially the characteristics of the Han nationality, which constitute the main part of the Chinese nation, it is a peaceful, non-expansionist nation, and with the prosperity of the economy, the Chinese pacifist tendency will reach the historical new height. Han nationality is still the main body of the Chinese nation, its characteristics will lead China's future diplomacy. From 1840 to 1949, the Chinese lived in the context of civil war, revolution and invasions, so Chinese are cherished for the precious peace and economic prosperity, and inner pacifism will grow with the development of economy. Since China's economic prosperity and the world economy depend on each other, China will take the road of peace and cooperation.

Whether from the perspective of realism or neoliberal institutionalism, the rise of emerging powers will cause new changes to the international power structure. In the anarchic world constituted of the sovereign states, power is the basic support for maintaining the international political structure and order, and the rise or decline of a great power will change the power structure in world politics.

The rise of China will not fundamentally change the power structure of the world for a long time, but the rise of China have far-reaching impact on the political structure of East Asia. The rise of China will profoundly change the political structure of East Asia from 1840, especially the rise of Japan and the presence of American forces in East

Asia. From a broader perspective, China's rise will have a great impact on world peace and development. China has now basically integrated into the existing international order, taking the path of establishing a new international political and economic order through coordination with major powers through international organizations such as the United Nations. After China's accession to the WTO, China has joined all major international organizations and has integrated into the international system. Since then, the major powers of the world, although dissatisfied with the existing order, but have become the status quo state, rather than the revisionist countries or revolutionary countries. With economic globalization, deepening interdependence, more perfect and more influential international institutions, the world will enter into a new era of great powers coordination and global governance. This is the primary international political influence and significance of China's rise, and China's rise and its integration into the existing international system is one of the most significant and profound changes in international politics in the 21st century.

China's rise will also profoundly affect the world economy. In the era of globalization, China's economic development and prosperity itself has an important global impact. At the same time, China's economic development will play a huge role in promoting regional economy and the world economy. China's rise will make China one of the engines of the world economy. Unlike the closed system in history, China's rise in the 21st century happens in the context of extensive contact with the world. Therefore, the rise of China's economy has a spillover effect, its huge market and trade opportunities will make opportunities for the world economic development, especially the

surrounding areas and major trade powers can benefit from the development of China's economy. China will become one of the pillars of maintaining the world economic stability and preventing and resolving the global economic crisis. China's performance in the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis and 2008 Global Financial Crisis indicates the role China will play in the development of the world economy in the future.

Another important international impact of China's rise will be China's comprehensive participation in global governance. The increasing national strength of China enables China to participate in global governance. With the guidance of the new global concept and vision, China has enough willingness and preparation to participate in global governance. The idealism of China's traditional Harmony World will play an important and positive influence in global governance. Major countries also need China to participate in the governance of global issues, countries around the world will need to promote China's participation in global governance.

The harmonious world was elaborated by Chinese President Hu Jintao on the 60th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations on September 15, 2005. The core contents include: insisting on multilateralism and achieving common security; maintaining the authority of the UN Security Council and actively and steadily promoting the reform of the United Nations; resolving international disputes and conflicts through consultation and negotiation; promoting universal development and common prosperity; respecting the diversity of civilization and learning from each other and improving oneself. This is a new self-orientation based on its own traditional culture and its current national strength, inheriting and innovating the Five Principles



of Peaceful Coexistence and the Peaceful Rise. In addition, Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi further explained to the international community that China would truthfully define China's international position and role, doing nothing beyond the national conditions and capability, but do not avoid the due international obligations.

The harmonious world is a new self-position made by the Chinese government in the complex and ever-changing international environment to meet new challenges and maintain world peace. Although other countries can communicate with China without knowing the self-position, but mutual understanding helps to enhance communication and eliminate mistrust, thus increasing cooperation opportunities. With the guidance of the concept of harmonious world, the communication between China and Southeast Asian countries are enhanced, and the influence of China in Southeast Asia is also increasing.

China's development depend on the world, likewise, the world's prosperity also needs China. Taking the path of peaceful development requires unifying China's domestic development and opening-up, linking China's development with the development of the world and combining the fundamental interests of the Chinese people with the common interests of the people of the whole world. China maintains a harmonious development at home and adhered to peaceful development abroad. These two aspects are closely linked and are organic unity as a whole, which is conducive to building a harmonious world of lasting peace and common prosperity. This is the common aspiration of the peoples of the whole world and the lofty goal of China's path of peaceful development. China is the founder of the concept of harmonious world and

will be the main practitioner of the harmonious world.

China has put forward the initiative of building the China-ASEAN Community of Common Destiny at the same time as the OBOR initiative. On October 3, 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered an important speech entitled *Working Together to Build the China-ASEAN Community of Common Destiny* in the Indonesian Congress, comprehensively expounded China's good-neighborly and friendly policy towards the ASEAN, and solemnly put forward the wish of constructing the 21st century Maritime Silk Road and China-ASEAN Community of Common Destiny together with the ASEAN countries. Xi also stressed in the speech to adhere to harmony, cooperation, help, so that both sides become good friends and partners with common goal. This is the first time that China put forward the concept of China-ASEAN Community of Common Destiny.

In terms of the China-ASEAN Community of Common Destiny, it is the recognition of the basic values, development concepts and future challenges of the two sides, and the recognition of the common problems facing the region. The process of building China-ASEAN Community of Common Destiny is to strengthen the process of mutual recognition. Members need to fully communicate with each other and understand each other to reach a consensus; get a certain degree of integration in economy through long-term cooperation, sharing the real interests; respect each other in politics, expanding the consensus and narrowing differences; depend on each other in security; communicate with each other closely in social culture, which is the most direct means to enhance the sense of Identity.

Building the 21st century Maritime Silk Road brings more common interests for China and the ASEAN, laying the foundation for the China-ASEAN Community of Common Destiny. The China-ASEAN Community of Common Destiny is the community of interests, the interests is the foundation of the community. From political point of view, the 21st century Maritime Silk Road initiative expressed China's ideas of peace and win-win cooperation, contributing to the stability and development of the region, which is the common interests of China and the ASEAN. From economic point of view, to build the 21st century Maritime Silk Road will bring tangible benefits for China and the ASEAN countries through a series of maritime cooperation projects, maritime communication projects and the China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor construction, benefitting 20 billion people. China and the ASEAN will form a closer partnership and community of interests, thus laying a solid material foundation for the community of common destiny.

Building the 21st century Maritime Silk Road requires strengthening political mutual trust and jointly safeguarding maritime security, sharing responsibility and establishing a community of common responsibility, which is indispensable content of the China-ASEAN Community of Common Destiny. Interests and responsibilities are inseparable. The interests are the foundation of a community of common destiny, while the responsibility is the protection and development is the goal. The strategic status of the waters in Southeast Asia is significant, and the Malacca Strait is one of the world's busiest channel, so the maintenance of maritime security is important for China and the ASEAN. Building the 21st century Maritime Silk Road includes maintaining the

maritime security together, combating piracy, protecting maritime resources and ecological environment, which requires the countries in this region to implement with a strong sense of responsibility, do their best to meet the challenges. The ASEAN countries, including those have sovereignty dispute over the South China Sea with China, are all partners to build the 21st century Maritime Silk Road. All the ASEAN countries can participate in the maritime cooperation projects and equally. Building the 21st century Maritime Silk Road together may be able to ease the conflict in the South China Sea, provide a new way to solving the South China Sea dispute, thus reducing the obstacles for constructing the China - ASEAN Community of Common Destiny.

Building the 21st century Maritime Silk Road benefits the development of China and the ASEAN, and accelerate the process of China-ASEAN regional economic integration. Although China and most ASEAN countries are developing countries, but they have great differences in economic development. The best way to narrow the difference is common development. The 21st century Maritime Silk Road, or the construction of OBOR projects will improve the infrastructure of Southeast Asia, thus ASEAN countries can fully share their interests.

The construction of the OBOR will promote the extensive communication between the people of China and the ASEAN countries, enhance friendship, improve sense of identity, and help build the China-ASEAN Community of Common Humanity, which is an integral part of China-ASEAN Community of Common Destiny. The harmony between different cultures and the friendship between different people will promote the development of tourism and mutual understanding, enhancing the sense of identity

between each other, thus providing a spiritual guarantee for the construction of the community of common destiny.

In a word, building the 21st century Maritime Silk Road will promote the construction of the China-ASEAN Community of Common Destiny. China and the ASEAN should take the opportunity to deepen the cooperation, increase maritime connectivity, upgrade the ACFTA, and promote bilateral policy communication, road connectivity, trade flow, capital flow and cultural exchanges. At the same time, it should also be rational to see that the OBOR initiative and the China-ASEAN Community of Common Destiny are made by China unilaterally. Although it has received a lot of positive response from the ASEAN countries, some countries still have doubts about China's intention. So China should continue to increase trust and explain doubts through various channels to obtain their trust and understanding. In the end, the development of the China-ASEAN Community of Common Destiny is a very important issue in the future and is bound to face various challenges. The Chinese government, enterprises and public must be fully prepared. It is imperative to use a variety of ways to actively explain the OBOR initiative and the meaning of China - ASEAN fate Community of Common Destiny, not only to the officials of the ASEAN countries, but also to the public. It is necessary to obtain the general understanding and support of the public, so as to successfully promote the implementation of these two great historical mission.

## **5. Conclusion**

China has become the world's second largest economy and one of the most important powers in international relations. Due to historical interactions and geographical links, China has close but complex relations with Southeast Asian countries. From realist perspectives and consideration of the ideology, western countries, especially the United States create the China Threat Theory and see China as the threat to the existing system. Because of bad historical memories and influence of western countries, Southeast Asian countries insist on the strategy of balancing and accept the China Threat Theory.

However, from viewpoints of neoliberal institutionalism, China is pursuing cooperation with Southeast Asian countries and the ASEAN. Southeast Asian is a big market for China and Southeast Asian countries can benefit from China's development. During China's rise, China has initiated the AIIB, the OBOR, the ACFTA and other international institutions to promote cooperation. China and the world depend on each other, China is the powerful engine of the world economy. Despite sovereignty dispute with some Southeast Asian countries, China suggests make consensus and develop together. Different way of thinking based on different theories and reality lead to divergent views on China's role in Southeast Asia.

## **6. Limitation**

The South China Sea dispute remains unsolved and hinders the development of relations between China and Southeast Asian countries. But the claiming of sovereignty requires evidence and international law. Due to lack of understanding of the International Maritime Law and recognition of evidence of either sides, this paper doesn't discuss about the South China Sea dispute.

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