

## **Comparative Analysis of U.S. 2017 National Security Strategy Document towards China and Iran**

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### **Abstract**

This study aimed at examining U.S. action pattern during Trump's presidency regarding China and Iran as two major regional actors and overall strategy of the U.S. within the framework of regional order of East Asia and the Middle East. Contrary to some analysts that consider Trump's foreign policy doctrine as ambiguous or contradictory, the main argument in this paper is that the most important feature of Trump's strategy toward China and Iran is the "offshore balancing" which is based on the "balance of power against China" and "balance of threat against Iran". This is concluded according to analysis of the 2017 National Security Strategy document and Trump's measures and speech acts during his presidency. This paper is a descriptive-analytic research emphasizing comparative approach and data gathering method is based on documentation.

**Keywords:** U.S. national security strategy, Trump, Balance, Iran, China

## **1. Introduction**

Donald Trump victory in the 2016 U.S. election and his arrival in January 2017 as the forty-fifth president of the United States using the slogan "Make America great again", marks the beginning of a turn in the grand strategy of America from multilateralism and internationalism towards unilateralism and economic isolation.

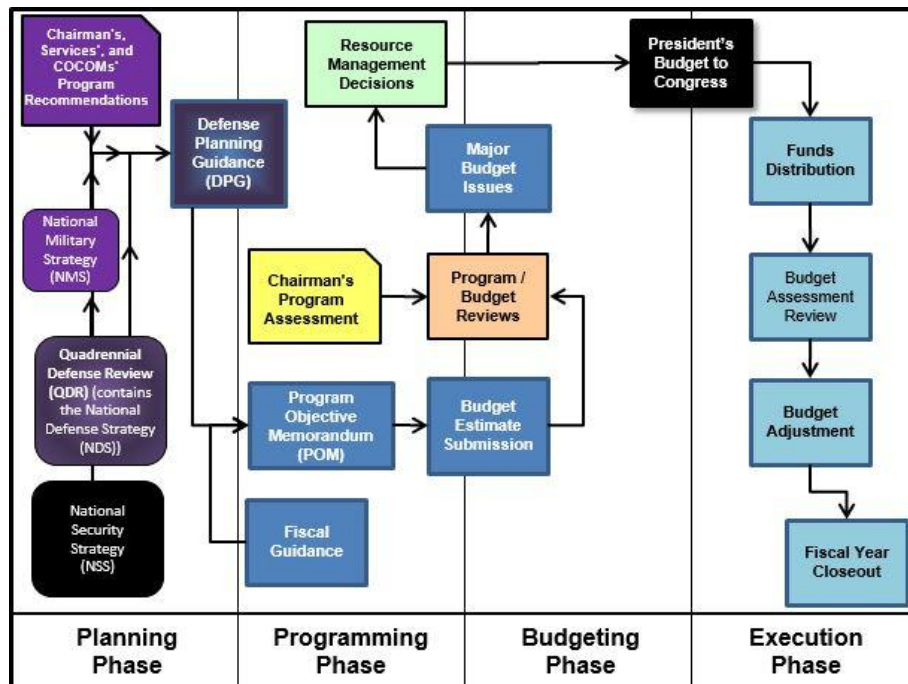
According to many international relations theorists, this victory occurred during decline of the United States' hegemony and end of the era of "American peace" in the global order (See to Klark and Hook, 2012 and Smith, 2015). For example, Fried Zakaria, in his book "The Post American World", referred to the term "Rise of the Rest" as the third great power shift in contemporary times, and consider China as the main sign of this rise and specifically its economic empowerment. According to him, the United States should not neglect these changes and take the initiative (Zakaria, 2009). In this regard, in a report titled "Extending American Power" in 2016, by the Center for a new American Security, in Washington, it is argued that, to maintain its hegemony, the United States must use its full potential to absorb or suppress opposing and non-aligned countries with the desirable American order in the world, and to this end, it must remain the world first military and economic power (Campbell et al. 2016).

Therefore, one of the most important aspects of the Trump's foreign policy doctrine, along with the attempt to revive U.S. power, is how it deal with challenging states that could pose a threat to power and security of U.S. In the same vein, in the 2017 National Security Strategy document of U.S, trump explicitly mentions the states of China and Iran as challenging states of the international system and disruptive existing order that must be controlled by the U.S. By analyzing this document, it can be concluded that in Trump's belief system perceived threat from China and Iran is completely different. Therefore, the main purpose of this paper is to compare different representation of their threat and how to control them based on data from the 2017 National Security Strategy document.

The National Security Strategy document is a periodic document issued by the President for the Congress of America. The document that inspiring the Military National Strategy (NMS) document and the National Defense Strategy (NDS) document, essentially includes U.S. aims and perceptions of the national security threats at three levels of national, regional, and global,

as well as the ideals and ideas of U.S. The National Security Strategy is part of the grand strategy or an illustration of this strategy which is defined as a set of guiding principles on the aims of a state in the international arena, the means to achieve these aims and threats to its national security (Dombrowski and Reich, 2017).

Figure 1: National security strategy in the policy making process of the US state



Source: <http://acqnotes.com/acqnote/acquisitions/national-defense-strategy-nds>.

The last U.S. national security strategy document was released by president Trump in December 2017, which will be addressed in the next section.

## 2. Research Method

This paper is a descriptive-analytic study with an emphasis on comparative approach and data gathering method is based on documentation.

### **3. Conceptual framework**

In this section, we will examine two concepts of "balance of power" and "balance of threat" in the theoretical literature of international relations, and then we will examine the concept of "offshore balancing" strategy.

Balance of Power: This concept is one of the key concepts of Morgenthau in the "Politics among nations" book. According to Morgenthau (1973), the balance of power is the result of a policy of power and the inevitable result of power struggle in the anarchic structure of the international system. In his view, the balance of power is to create a balance and prevent one member from dominating other members formed as alliances between states against a state that seeks to increase power (p: 199). Therefore, as a result of the balance of power, if any state wants to be hegemonic power in the international system, at any time, is opposed by other states (Little, 2007).

Unlike Morgenthau, who sees the balance of power as a result of the state power seeking, Waltz, with a structural point of view, considers the balance of power as inevitable result of anarchic nature of international system. In his view, the structure of international politics is very stable, and events and patterns, including the pattern of balance of power, are constantly repeated. He believes that in an anarchic international system, just few number of great powers can exist, and the distribution of power among these great powers determines the form of the structure of the system.

In Waltz's view, the balance of power is the unintended outcome of decisions of all states to ensure their survival in the structure, which ultimately leads to balance and stability of the system. Therefore, the first objective of balancing behavior is to prevent formation of hegemonic state or potential hegemonies, since any change in distribution of power causes insecurity and leads to balancing behavior and formation of alliances and coalitions (external balance) in the face of the disruptive power (Waltz, 1979, 1996).

Hadley Bull (2002), a theorist of the English school, sees the balance of power as one of the main institutions for maintaining order in the international community. He distinguishes between "contingency balance of power" and "contrived balance of power" believing that the contingency balance of power is a temporary and random phenomenon between states, while the contrived balance of power is a conscious and continuous effort by

great powers which is considered to be a vital source of order and stability (p: 112). In Klieman's view (2015), in the model of balance of power, there is no fixed union, so the "selective interaction" policy is formed by the actor or actors who seeking for creation of it.

Balance of threat: In completing the concept of "balance of power", Walt, the classical Neorealist theorist introduces the concept of "balance of threat." According to balance of threat theory, states' alliance behavior is determined by the threat they perceive from other states. Walt contends that states will generally balance by allying against a perceived threat. Walt identifies four criteria states use to evaluate the threat posed by another state: its aggregate strength (size, population, and economic capabilities), its geographic proximity, its offensive capabilities, and its offensive intentions (Walt, 1987, 2003).

From Walt's point of view, therefore, what is important in relations between states is their perception of each other as a threat, not just the power of each of them. So, the states counterbalance those states that are threatening their existence or their interests. Here, balancing behaviors can be in the form of cooperation, unity or regionalism against the threatening and external power (see Walt 1991).

Thus, it can be argued that the purpose of balance of threat is to increase deterrence against the perceived threats, while, in the balance of power, the principle is to establish a balance between equal powers in order to prevent superiority of each of them.

Offshore Balancing Strategy: This strategy means buck passing and using other powers to face and control potential hegemony. Offshore balancing is a strategic concept used in realist analysis in international relations. It describes a strategy in which a great power uses favored regional powers to check the rise of potentially-hostile powers. According to this concept, the US state has vital interests in the three regions of Europe, East Asia and the Persian Gulf, and the United States' grand strategy must prevent emergence of rival and hostile states in each of these regions through an offshore balancing strategy. In the same vein, it must be stated that the concept of proxy wars is very close to this strategy (Mossallanejad, 2018: 33).

Walt and Merishiemer, in their article (2016) introduces offshore balancing as the best strategy for America's foreign policy in the years to come. They believe that, according to this strategy, the United States must

give priority to domination of the Western Hemisphere and instead of direct military intervention in other regions, especially Eurasia, it should act through regional alliances and partners. According to Walt (2005), the United States must hold out a large part of its troops out of the conflict and only intervene when there is no other way to protect the vital interests of it, so intervention is the last resort (p: 222).

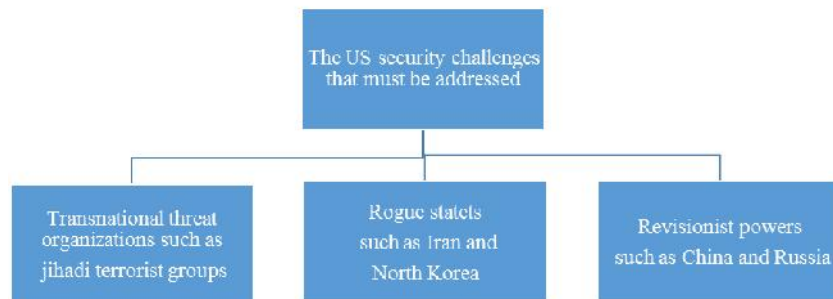
Therefore, offshore balancing strategy refers to transfer of responsibility from the United States to others (Mersheimer, 2014: 159). The strategy of using great partners and assigning responsibilities and imposing military spending on regional states that have signed a partnership with the U.S. state(Ghodarzi, 2018).

#### 4. Research Findings

##### 4.1. Representation of China and Iran in the 2017 National Security Strategy document

According to the National Security Strategy document, three categories of challenges are defined for the U.S. state:

Figure 2: Defined challenges for the U.S. state in the 2017 document



Source: “2017 National Security Strategy of the United States of America” in <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/.../2017/12/NSS-Final>

As it is clearly shown, in Trump’s belief system, the nature of Iran’s and China’s threats are completely different. In this regard he states, “China challenge American power, influence, and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity” (NSS, 2017: 2). In his view, the state of

China as a revisionist state disturbing the balance of power and tends to reshaping regional order by increasing its economic and military power, expanding political influence and increasing involvement in regional multilateral institutions. In the regional relations level according to the document data,

China seeks to displace the United States in the Indo-Pacific region, expand the reaches of its state-driven economic model, and reorder the region in its favor. Its efforts to build and militarize outposts in the South China Sea endanger the free flow of trade, threaten the sovereignty of other nations, and undermine regional stability ... We will help South Asian nations maintain their sovereign as China increases its influence in the region (NSS, 2017: 50).

In the economic sphere, according to the document, China as a rival state, steals U.S. intellectual property in the economic sphere every year and uses sophisticated tools as a form of cyber-warfare to undermine business and American economy (NSS, 2017: 25). Trump explicitly states that, "We will work with our partners to contest China's unfair trade and economic practices and restrict its acquisition of sensitive technologies" (NSS, 2017: 46). For Trump, the state of China, as the second-largest economy in the world, has resorted to unfair trade relations by keeping the value of its currency low, which must be met by U.S. deterrence and punishment (Perthes, 2016).

In the military sphere, according to document, China has mounted a rapid military modernization campaign designed to limit U.S. access to the region and provide this country a freer hand there. China is also developing advanced weapons and capabilities that could threaten US critical infrastructure (NSS, 2017: 30). Ofcourse according to Chatham house Report (2017), regional security issues and even Chinese military actions do not have the same significance for Trump as those of economic empowerment. According to the report, even human rights and democracy-related issues are also not very effective in the relationship between US and China.

In contrary to representation of China as a rival state, representation of Iran as a threatening and rough state in the 2017 document is very distinctive. In this regard, Iran as a revisionist state with unlimited aims is a concern for Trump due to his actions, including support of terrorist groups around the world and explicit hostility with the United States (NSS, 2017: 7). According to document, Islamic Republic of Iran are determined to

destabilize regions, threaten Americans and our allies...Iran supports terrorist groups and openly calls for our destruction...The Iranian regime sponsors terrorism around the world. It is developing more capable ballistic missiles and has the potential to resume its work on nuclear weapons that could threaten the United States and our partners (NSS, 2017).

#### **4.2. Representation of China and Iran in the 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS)**

This document that inspired by the national security strategy document, considers China and Iran as the main challenges facing the U.S. national security as revisionist and rogue states. In this regard, the document mentions the state of China as a "strategic competitor" using predatory economics to intimidate its neighbors while militarizing features in the South China Sea. According to this document, China wants to shape a world consistent with their authoritarian model—gaining veto authority over other nations' economic, diplomatic, and security decisions. In this regard NDS document explicitly states that,

China is leveraging military modernization, influence operations, and predatory economics to coerce neighboring countries to reorder the Indo-Pacific region to their advantage. As China continues its economic and military ascendance, asserting power through an all-of-nation long-term strategy, it will continue to pursue a military modernization program that seeks Indo-Pacific regional hegemony in the near-term and displacement of the United States to achieve global preeminence in the future (Summary of NDS of America, 2018: 4).

In this document Iran as a rogue state continues to sow violence and remains the most significant challenge to Middle East stability and the entire international system. In this regard NDS document explicitly states that, "Iran is competing with its neighbors, asserting an arc of influence and instability while vying for regional hegemony, using state-sponsored terrorist activities, a growing network of proxies, and its missile program to achieve its objectives" (Summary of NDS of America, 2018: 3).

In the next section, we will refer to different components that cause China and Iran understand as threatening and challenging states of the international system from the point of view of the U.S. state, and in particular, president Trump. The first component is China's empowerment and the second component is related to Iran's behavior, which has created



threat perception. These two different components have led to the "offshore balancing strategy" for both states based on the concept of "balance of power against China" and the concept of "balance of threat against Iran" in Trump's foreign policy

### **4.3. China's Empowerment**

Farid Zakaria (2009) describes China as the largest country with the fastest economic growth, the world's biggest industrial producer, the world's second-biggest consumer, the world's biggest saver, the world's Second biggest military spender and the world's second-biggest spender.

Therefore, according to Zakaria's definition, the most important sphere of power-seeking by china is in the economic sphere. Since 1979, China's GDP has grown by an average of 10% annually, which increased to 15% in 2015, and if this growth continues, China's GDP will surpass the United States by 2026 and it will be recognized as the world biggest economy(Santasombat, 2015: 137). Evaluations of credible financial institutions show China will continue economic growth in the coming decades (Mastanduno, 2014: 171).

One of the key aspects of China's economic growth has been foreign investment over the past three decades. In this context, since 2012, China has become the biggest attractor of foreign direct investment after the United States (Zhang, 2014: 536). This factor, along with its economic institutionalization in its own region, such as establishment of the Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) Asia, or the Beijing consensus as a substitute for regional liberal trade arrangements, are among other important and influential factors in the China's economic empowerment (Lanteigne, 2016: 1).

Regarding China's empowerment in the economic sphere, the report on "Global Trends" published by the U.S. National Intelligence Council in 2012 stated that, in the next two decades, China will surpass the United States as the world biggest economy (Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds 2012). In the same vein, discussion of the "Beijing Consensus" against the "Washington Consensus" shows China's economic power (Hasmath, 2014). China's growing economic capabilities have also affected its military capabilities. Since 2005, it had the second biggest military budget in the world after the US, increasing from \$ 14.4 billion in 2000 to \$ 144.2 billion in 2015 (Muzalevsky, 2015: 27). Expansion of the military budget has

directly led to the modernization of its military forces, which together with the increase of regional influence, are considered by the United States as indications of revisionist incentives and attempts to disturb the balance of power (Guang, 2008: 249-250).

In the “World Government Summit”, held in United Arab Emirate, in 2018, Fukuyama referring to China’s empowerment, especially in the economic sphere, emphasized the emergence of a new multipolar order in the international system and the end of U.S hegemony, especially since U.S. 2008 economic crisis (Fukuyama 2018).

#### **4.4. Trump and perceived threats from Iran’s behaviors**

In general, Iran’s threat and perceived threats from Iran’s behaviors is one of the key factors that has been emphasized in Trump’s era. Representation of Iran as a threat to both the region and the entire international system is one of the main axis of the speeches of President Trump and his administration’s officials, including Mike Pompeo, former head of the Central Intelligence Agency and current Foreign Minister, McMaster U.S. National Security Advisor, or Nicky Haley, the U.S. state representative at the United Nations.

For example, in the "Defense of Democracy Foundation", Pompeo (2017) explicitly stated that, “President Trump concluded that the Islamic Republic of Iran is a major source of instability in the Middle East and a major threat to the United States”. On April 21, 2018, he also had a lecture entitled "After a deal: a new strategy for Iran" at the Heritage Foundation, considering Iran’s behaviors as threatening, he introduced the new strategy of U.S. state towards Iran as unprecedented financial pressures and new sanctions (Pompeo, 2018).

Trump, also, after exit from the nuclear deal, stated that, “Our policy is based on a clear-eyed assessment of the Iranian sponsorship of terrorism, and its continuing aggression in the Middle East and all around the world”(Trump, 2018). In this regard perceived threats from Iran’s behaviors according to the national security strategy document are,

Iran, the world’s leading state sponsor of terrorism, has taken advantage of instability to expand its influence through partners and proxies, weapon proliferation, and funding. It continues to develop more capable ballistic

missiles and intelligence capabilities, and it undertakes malicious cyber activities (NSS, 2017: 59).

In general, the main axes of Iran's behaviors that cause treat perception from this country are:

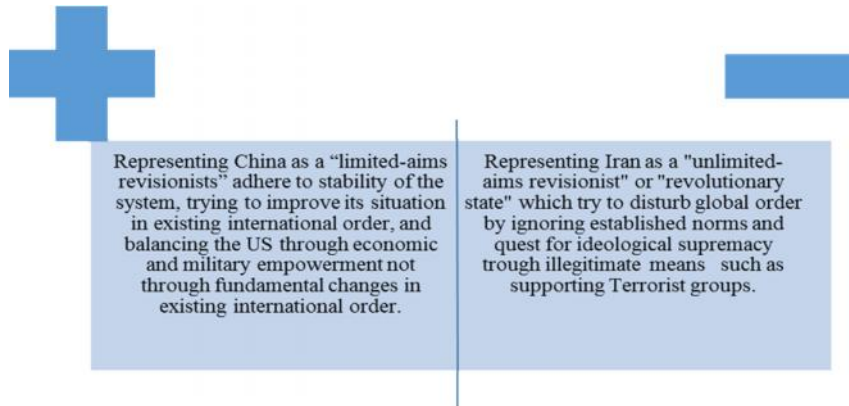
1. Iran's nuclear activities;
2. Ballistic missile development and proliferation;
3. Material and financial support for terrorism and extremism;
4. Support for the Assad regime's atrocities against the Syrian people;
5. Iran's actions against U.S. regional allies, notably Saudi Arabia, Israel and the United Arab Emirates;
8. Unrelenting hostility to Israel;
8. Consistently threatening freedom of navigation, especially in the strategically vital Persian Gulf;
9. Cyber-attacks against the United States, Israel, and America's other allies and partners in the Middle East (A new US strategy on Iran, 2017).

### **5. Data analysis**

Schweller (2015), argued that there are four dimensions to revisionism that, taken together, determine whether the revisionist state poses a dangerous threat to the established powers and to what degree: (1) the extent of the revisionist state's aims; (2) the revisionist state's resolve and risk propensity to achieve its aims; (3) the nature of its revisionist aims (does it seek changes in international norms, or territory, or prestige); and (4) the means it employs to further its revisionist aims (whether peaceful or violent). Then he stated that, "There are basically two types of dissatisfied states: limited-aims revisionists and unlimited-aims revisionists or revolutionary power".

According to this categorization, Trump's perception of China and Iran's revisionist behavior describe as follows:

Figure 3. Trump's perception of China and Iran's revisionist behavior



**Source:** "2017 National Security Strategy of the United States of America" in <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/.../2017/12/NSS-Final>

According to this representation, the U.S. state, as a rational actor, must respond to increasing China's power based on the concept of a "balance of power" and preventing the collapse of existing order. In the same vein, Mersheimer (2010) believes that great powers, such as U.S. hegemony against rising powers which is not predictable, must react as there is little chance that these powers do not use their power to change the status quo. In his view, every great power, including China, wants to maximize its share of global power and dominate the entire international system in the form of a hegemonic role, and, as a result of the rise of China, this domination can't be peaceful, and the U.S. state must react (Brzezinski and Mersheimer, 2005). He also points to China's hidden power (Its population and wealth) and warns that it may change the balance of power in the future in favor of China, and what should be the source of insecurity for the United States is to hesitate about how will China use its hidden resources in the future (Mersheimer, 2001, 368). Similarly, the 2017 document explicitly states that "The United States must prepare for this type of competition, we will raise our competitive game to meet that challenge, to protect American interests, and to advance our values" (NSS, 2017: 28).

Regarding the different nature of China and Iran's revisionism, the Brookings Institution's report should be considered as it states that: there is

currently no appetite in China to overturn the existing global order or to build a parallel system, but the leadership will try to curb integration in sensitive areas while preserving economic access. Therefore, China only wants to upgrade its regional power and does not seek to challenge the United States at the international level (Build Situations of Strength, 2017:19).

However, for Iran, the report states that: The United States must balance Iran and deter it from aggressive actions that threaten stability, international order, and our vital interests or those of our allies. The goal of this balancing should be to change Iranian behavior, Iran wants to construct its own parallel system. (Ibid, 2017: 34).

Therefore, it can be concluded that U.S. perceived threats from Iran and China is completely different.

### **5.1. Use of Offshore Balancing Strategy**

Although the representation of Iran and China is quite different for Trump and can be examined on the basis of "balance of power against China" and "balance of threat against Iran", the strategy used against both states is "offshore balancing". In this regard Trump (2016) stated, "Our allies are not paying their fair share, the whole world will be safer if our allies do their part to support our common defense and security".

Emphasize on offshore balancing strategy, the CATO report, one of the most respected and independent American institutions, entitled "Our Foreign Policy Choices: Rethinking Americas Global Role" in 2016, should be considered. In this report, as a recommendation to the president of The United States, it is suggested that the United States needs an alternative policy that, while strengthening its defense structures, expects other countries to be more responsible to address the challenges of their regions(Preble, 2016). In his recent paper, Walt (2018) suggests that the U.S. grand strategy should be an offshore balancing policy.

The 2018 U.S. national defense strategy also emphasizes the policy of strengthening allies and attract new partners in order to maintain the regional balance of power and deter the revisionist states. In this document, three points are explicitly expressed: the division of responsibility and accountability, expanding Indo-Pacific alliances and partnerships, form

enduring coalitions in the Middle East (Summary of NDS of America, 2018).

The offshore balancing strategy also has been emphasized in the 2017 U.S. national security, in this regard according to this document: The United States must marshal the will and capabilities to compete and prevent unfavorable shifts in the Indo-Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East. Sustaining favorable balances of power will require a strong commitment and close cooperation with allies and partners because allies and partners magnify U.S. power and extend U.S. influence. They share our interests and responsibility for resisting authoritarian trends, contesting radical ideologies, and deterring aggression (NSS, 2017, 45).

#### **5.1.1 Offshore balancing strategy and control of China**

During the presidency of Trump, the U.S. state tried to harness the power of China using offshore balancing strategy instead of the policy of China's engagement in international affairs, so Trump strengthened security relationships between the America and neighboring countries of China and assignment of more responsibility to these states (Pathak, 2017). Therefore, it is explicitly stated in the document that:

U.S. allies are critical to responding to mutual threats, and preserving our mutual interests in the Indo-Pacific region... Sustaining favorable balances of power will require a strong commitment and close cooperation with allies and partners because allies and partners magnify U.S. power and extend U.S. influence. Our alliance with South Korea, is stronger than ever. We welcome and support the strong leadership role of our critical ally, Japan. We welcome India's emergence as a leading global power and stronger strategic and defense partner. We will seek to increase quadrilateral cooperation with Japan, Australia, and India (NSS, 2017: 46).

In applying the offshore balancing strategy, Trump believes that the neighboring states of China are too much dependent on the U.S. for their security against China's threats and need to be more independent. This belief had a direct impact on the U.S. withdrawal from the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) Treaty. In this context, Trump repeatedly mentioned that countries in this region, especially Japan, don't to pay their shares of defense in the region and they are constantly relying on America (Spatafora,

2017: 3) He also explicitly asked Japan and South Korea to empower themselves, even if necessary, with a nuclear weapon (Lanteigne, 2016).

While opponents of the offshore balance strategy, believe that none of the Chinese neighbors, even Japan, do not have the ability to restrain and control China's rising power, and that the U.S. state should directly control it through the strategic presence in the region (Ross, 2013). In this regard, The February report of Brookings Institution argued that the East Asian and Middle Eastern partners are more enthusiastic about the U.S. involvement in the region than self-reliance on security and controlling China or Iran (Build Situations of Strength, 2017).

#### **5.1.2. Offshore Balancing Strategy and control of Iran**

To implement offshore balancing strategy in the 2017 National Security Strategy document, it is explicitly stated that, "We will work with partners to neutralize Iran's malign activities in the region and even create new partnerships to counter this threat (NSS, 2017: 60). In this regard, the Brookings Institution has also suggested: In the Middle East, America's first goal must be to restore stability in the region, through increasing engagement with our traditional friends and allies to balance Iran and deter it from aggressive actions that threaten regional stability, international order, and our vital interests or those of our allies (Build Situations of Strength, 2017: 44).

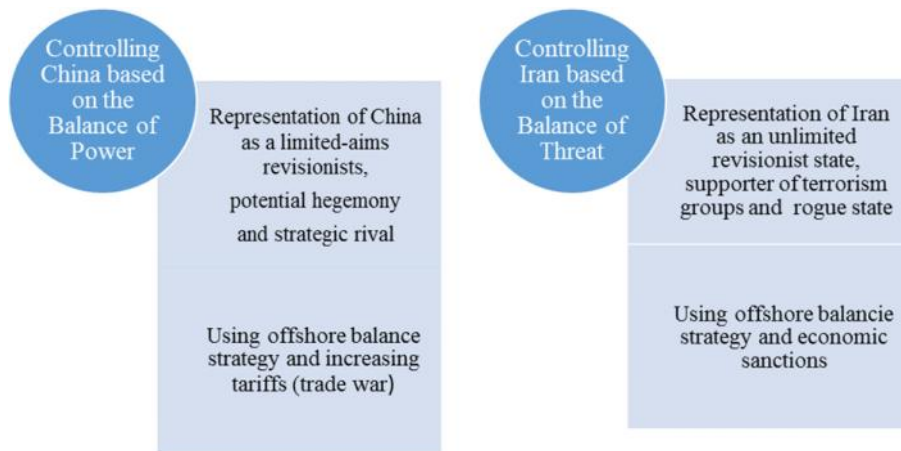
The main component of this strategy is to use regional allies such as Israel and Saudi Arabia and its main aim is to curb and isolate Iran in the short term, and in the mid-term, regime change from within and through sanctions. Trump's opposition to the Comprehensive Joint of Action Plan and withdrawal from it can be explain in this context (see to Trump, 2017). In line with the offshore balance strategy and strengthening regional alliances to curb Iran, we can mention the first Trump's foreign trip to Saudi Arabia in 2017 that leads to arms deal between two states, this deal was widely seen as a counterbalance against the influence of Iran in the region and a "significant" and "historic" expansion of United States relations with Saudi Arabia (Trump arrives in Saudi Arabia in the first foreign trip, 2017).

### 5.2. Use of economic pressures to control Iran and China

Along with the offshore balance strategy, Trump uses economic pressures to restrict Iran and China in two different ways. In this regard, Trump, with a critical look at China's trade approach and the belief that it just has benefited from the global trade and has increased its strength, used the policy of increasing economic tariffs on Chinese goods (Ya and Davidson, 2016). Trump's sensitivity to China is more about China's economic empowerment, and more than anything, he seeks superiority over China in this sphere. Therefore, China, as a state with rapid economic growth, defines as economic rival for the Trump. In this regard, Mershiemer (2010) believes that a developed China is inevitably seeking to achieve regional hegemony and could threaten American interests in Asia (p: 24).

However, based on Trump's perception from Iran as a threatening actor and rogue state in international system, besides using of offshore balance strategy, he has resorted to sanctions to pressure on Iran. Its clear example can be seen in the U.S. Withdrawal from the (JACOBA) and the imposition of more severe sanctions against Iran. In this regard we can refer to the June 2017 congressional enactment, titled "Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act", that imposed sanctions on Iran, North Korea and Russia and on August 2, 2017, Trump signed it.

Figure 4: Iran and China in U.S. 2017 National Security Strategy Document





## **6. Conclusion**

With the debates about whether Trump has a grand strategy, if so what form it takes, and what form it should take, the main argument of this paper was that the most important aspect of Trump's national security strategy is the "offshore balance strategy" which is based on the concepts of "balance of power" and "balance of threat" on how to control China and Iran as two major challenges for the international system based on the data in U.S. 2017 NSS document and his behavioral and speech acts during his presidency.

In general, based on the data analysis, we can conclude that:

1. The balance of power concept and deterrence, can only be in front of China's power as a potential hegemony by the United States and can't be raised against Iran. According to Walt (2018), in the Middle East, no state, even Iran, is not powerful enough to be described as potential hegemony against the United States' power, while, China is undoubtedly a potential regional hegemony (p: 14), Therefore, according to this paper, the only point that justifies Iran's control and balance of this state in Trump's foreign policy is the threat perception on the basis of the concept of balance of threat.
2. Trump's offshore balance strategy against China is continuation of Obama's balance power policy. By raising the Asia-Pacific region as the focus of its national security strategy, Obama increased strategic cooperation with a broad range of East Asian nations (Ross, 2013: 20). But, in relation to Iran, in Trump's era the policy of "selective engagement" with Iran is replaced by "offshore balancing" and strengthening alliances with regional rivals of Iran, in particular, Saudi Arabia, based on the concept of the balance of threat and the perceived threats from Iran.
3. Trump, in global scale, instead of China's engagement policy has been used China's containment policy. According to the theory of balance of power, the great powers use control and balancing option against emerging powers, instead of cooperation with them, because they fear that cooperation will lead to dependence or that the gains from cooperation will be distributed in such a way as to be detrimental to them (Waltz, 1979: 106).
4. The common points in controlling Iran and China in the Trump's national security strategy are: emphasizing on increasing the role of regional allies in controlling them (offshore balance strategy), adopting bilateral instead of multilateral approaches to control the two countries (bilateral military

alliances with neighboring states of China and Iran), use of economic policies aimed at balancing and curbing the two countries including the economic policy of raising tariffs against Chinese goods and economic sanctions against Iran. Not considering democratization and human rights factors in how to deal with Iran and China. Similarly, Larres (2017) argues that in the overall strategy of Trump, it seems that the traditional orientation regarding consideration of democratic and human rights values, as well as the democratization and nation-building policies are not the base of the conduct of the U.S. state, anymore (p: 102).

5. The differences between how to control Iran and China in accordance with the 2017 Strategy document are: use of engagement policy along with the use of the balance policy towards China. According to 2017 national security strategy document, the US state is ready to cooperate with China in some areas of common interest (NSS, 2017). In this regard, the role of common economic interests should be considered in the relations between the two countries. While there is no such interdependence in the economic sphere between Iran and the US. In the other words confrontation or interaction with China is very important in the United States policy as the kind of relations between the two countries (friendship, hostility, or competition) has a significant impact on the functioning of international institutions which is not the case with Iran (Chatham House, 2017: 32-33). Based on the analysis of data in 2017 document.

The other difference on dealing with the two states is that, the ultimate aim of Trump's policy in the case of Iran is containment and regime change by securization of Iran and representing it as a threat to the peace and security of the region and the world. In this regard, even, some theorists have not even rejected the possibility of a proxy war between Iran and the United States (Krieg, 2016). However, in the case of China, reform of the state not changing it, is the main point.

The last point is that the US balance of power against the rise of China is in the context of "soft balance", which is a more implicit and controlled balance than official military alliances. This kind of balance implies an actor's intelligent diplomatic coordination to restrict and opposing the rival preferences (Pope, 2005), while the balance and control of Iran is not within the concept of "soft balance."

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