

A Q Methodology Analysis of Chinese Policy Makers' Perceptions of China's Foreign Policy Decision-Making Process concerning South Korea's THAAD Deployment

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This paper explores the diverse ways Chinese policymakers view the foreign policy process in China. Two approaches characterize conventional accounts of the foreign policy decision-making process. One of these, based on Graham Allison's rational, organizational, and bureaucratic politics models, focuses on intragovernmental aspects of foreign policy decision-making processes, while the other highlights extra-governmental domestic and foreign factors. However, these approaches have neglected the question of who leads foreign policy and how state, society, and grassroots interact through coalition. We interviewed Chinese scholars and foreign policy experts using Q statements to explore China's foreign policy response to South Korea's deployment of THAAD. Our findings offer new theoretical insights into China's foreign policy process by identifying state-driven, grassroots-based, and state-society coalition models.

Key Words: Foreign Policy, State-Driven and Grassroots-Based Perspective, State-Society Coalition, THAAD, Q Methodology

I. Introduction

South Korea and China have clashed dramatically over the deployment of THAAD missiles in South Korea. While China sees this deployment as part of the US containment strategy against China, South Korea views it as a response to North Korean nuclear missiles and is outraged by China's strong opposition.¹ The deeper reasons for this

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opposition have not been explored by the mass media or other studies.

The THAAD deployment controversy began when the US Department of Defense announced on June 5, 2014, that the South Korean government had requested information on the missile defense system. Then, on January 13, 2016, following national security and national interest expressed in the system at a New Year's press presentation, President Park Geun-Hye announced that it would consider allowing it to be deployed on the peninsula. Subsequently, the United States and South Korea decided it was necessary to deploy THAAD after North Korea launched a long-range missile into the East Sea on February 7, 2016.

On February 15, 2016, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China stated its resolute opposition to THAAD deployment on the Korean Peninsula. On July 8, 2016, ROK and US forces officially announced that the system would be deployed in Seongju, North Gyeongsang Province, to counter the North Korean nuclear and missile threat (Jae-yong 2016). On April 26, 2017, the US military brought some THAAD equipment, including two THAAD launchers, to Seongju Golf Course in South Korea (Lee 2017).

The South Korean government has publicly said that the deployment is solely intended to defend South Korea from North Korea's nuclear weapons and missiles. However, Beijing regards the deployment on the Korean Peninsula as a means for Washington to monitor China and upset the balance between China and other Asian countries (Yang 2019). When the Lotte Group decided to permit its golf course to be used as a site for THAAD deployment on February 27, 2017, the Chinese Foreign Ministry expressed fierce opposition, which snowballed into China's unilateral anti-South Korean backlash (Kim 2021). The Chinese government shut down almost all of Lotte's hypermarkets in China, and Lotte's duty-free sales fell by more than 25 percent. There were also massive public protests and boycotts, and senior government officials made anti-South Korean remarks. The South Korean government and the media have expressed deep concern about the Chinese government's severe economic retaliation against South Korean companies in China.

1 According to an August 2017 Gallup Korea survey, 72 percent of Koreans polled viewed THAAD deployment positively and 14 percent negatively, while 14 percent had no opinion (Gallup Korea Daily Opinion, issue 270, August 2017). The 72 percent in favor of THAAD deployment were also critical of President Moon Jae-in. A survey conducted immediately after the official announcement in July 2016 to deploy the missile system showed that 50 percent of the population supported it, while 32 percent opposed it. In January 2017, when China intensified its economic retaliation, the number in favor of the deployment of THAAD increased slightly to 51 percent (although the number opposed also increased to 40%). However, a survey conducted from July 4-6, 2017, immediately after President Moon Jae-in visited the United States, showed that 57 percent were in favor and 27 percent were against; this increase may be accounted for by the fact that support for the deployment was more pronounced among supporters of the ruling Democratic Party of Korea (Gallup Korea Daily Opinion, issue 270, 2017).

This study explores perceptions of the domestic and foreign factors that led the Chinese government to effect anti-South Korean foreign policy measures after the THAAD deployment. Researchers often draw on Graham Allison's rational, organizational, and bureaucratic political models in connection with the Cuban missile crisis in their accounts of the foreign policy process. However, this approach is limited in that it does not elucidate the paths through which the various viewpoints of the state, society, and experts as policy actors interact outside government. Although the conventional view is that power elite groups primarily direct foreign policy, recent research has noted how society and community voices influence foreign policy. Since all political and economic power in China is concentrated in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), most national policies, including foreign and domestic ones, are mainly designed and implemented in a top-down fashion (Piao and Jung 2021). However, a holistic approach to China's policy process requires a thorough review of various unacknowledged factors affecting the Chinese government's decision-making methods in recent years, including the rise of social media and the increasing influence of experts and think tanks (Hess and Aido 2016).

Using Q methodology, we examine overlooked perspectives on the Chinese foreign policy process in connection with the THAAD deployment in South Korea in terms of two dimensions: (1) who leads foreign policy and (2) how state and society interact with foreign policy. The Q methodology was developed to scientifically study the different subjective viewpoints of human beings (Brown, 1993). We used an in-depth interview format to reveal the views of Chinese scholars and bureaucrats that have been obscured by other conventional survey methods.

II. Literature Review

A. Chinese Foreign Policy: Domestic Perspective

Both domestic and foreign factors contributed to the sudden advent of anti-South Korean policies in China following the THAAD crisis. The domestic factors include nationalism, the nature of China's political system, and political propaganda. The highest degree of nationalism globally is found in China, which often relies on it to govern the country (Alagappa 1995; Tang and Darr 2012). The unique brand of Chinese nationalism enables the government to quickly mobilize the public to react in disproportionate ways to specific issues or policies (Tsang 2009). Although the Chinese government officially opposes violent protests or boycotts, it tends to overlook these acts of patriotism and

use them to promote its foreign policy (Wallace and Weiss 2015).

China launched national anti-Japanese movements in 2005, 2010, and 2012, which led to massive protests and boycotts (Moore 2010; Stokes 2016). Historical and territorial disputes between the two countries facilitated the mobilization of these actions (Gustafsson 2015). Japan invaded China multiple times during the Second World War, and the wounds of those invasions have remained open. Additionally, anti-Japanese sentiments may have intensified due to disputes over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in the last several decades.

The recent growth of the Chinese economy has led to a significant increase in patriotism and nationalism. In particular, under the Xi Jinping administration, the Chinese have come to believe that China has the same status as the United States and will soon become the world's strongest superpower (Xi 2017; Stevens 2020; Carrai 2021), which has contributed to a rise in nationalistic sentiments (Jun 2021; Wei and Davis 2021).

Since 1978, China has undergone rapid economic growth due to economic reforms. Yet political and democratic reforms have not kept pace, and the CCP still maintains a monopoly on power (Chen et al. 2018). It has established party committees in local governments, businesses, and media to strengthen its control (Zhao 2000; 2016). CCP members secure influential positions in government, military, and public institutions by forming special interest groups (Weiss and Wallace 2021).

The CCP constitution states that the party is obligated to actively promote propaganda, and through such propaganda, it emphasizes its primary purpose and that of the government (King, Pan, and Roberts 2013; 2017). The Chinese government has long used political propaganda and public nationalism in confronting Western countries (Tang and Darr 2012) and as means of asserting the power of the CCP (Zhao 2000; Wang 2008; Wang 2020). Given the context, the government's radical anti-South Korean policy following the THAAD deployment on the Korean Peninsula may have largely been an instance of political propaganda intended to incite public nationalism, similar to its use of propaganda in the past to incite anti-American and anti-Japanese movements.

The foreign factors include how China framed itself in the wake of its economic advancement, its disputes with the United States, and changes in foreign policy on the Korean Peninsula. In the early days of its economic development, China's progress was owed to the capital and technology of Western countries such as the United States. However, following the 2008 financial crisis, the Chinese economy grew at a rapid pace despite the global economic slowdown, which led the Chinese government and public to believe that China was undergoing a great rejuvenation and thus no longer needed to tolerate inappropriate interventions from the United States and other Western countries (Bai and Zheng 2019; Freymann and Wong 2021).

With the arrival of the Xi Jinping administration in 2013 in particular, public trust in the government increased due to anticorruption movements and the improved performance of state-owned companies, and the country relaxed its previously relatively conservative foreign policy and embraced foreign expansion (Piao and Jung 2021; Xinhua 2021; Bai, Cao, and Chen 2021). The Belt and Road Initiative, adopted in 2014, is representative of this new turn in China's foreign policy (Wang 2019; Wang et al. 2021).

The Chinese government and the public regard the United States as the biggest obstacle to the "great rejuvenation," and the former has been increasingly vocal in expressing its displeasure with the United States (Wen 2014; Yang, Cao, and Chen, 2021). American criticism of Chinese human rights policy and democracy are seen as means of keeping China in check. In conjunction with its long-standing anti-American attitude, the Chinese government's foreign expansion policy facilitated its and the Chinese public's radical anti-South Korean backlash that followed on the heels of the deployment of THAAD.

The Xi Jinping administration also distanced itself from North Korea. In 2014, the second year of his term, Xi visited South Korea before visiting North Korea, an unusual move as far as previous power relations between China and North Korea were concerned. Xi's visit to South Korea can be interpreted as an expression of China's dissatisfaction with North Korea's nuclear weapon tests, which put a strain on the relations between the two countries, as China was pressured to participate in international sanctions against North Korea (Jun 2017). The Xi Jinping administration has sought to improve its relationships with neighboring countries, reflected in changes in its foreign policy towards East Asia (Kim and Chung 2017). The deployment of THAAD on the Korean Peninsula directly threatened Chinese diplomatic strategy in East Asia. In addition, excessive anti-South Korean sentiment and economic retaliation by the Chinese public have significantly undermined public trust in both countries, which may negatively impact economic and cultural exchanges between the countries for a long time (Yoo 2017; Han 2019).

B. Neglected Aspects in Research on Chinese Foreign Policy Making

The relationship between China and South Korea is complicated by the link between security and the economy that has been created by economic interdependence (Hwang and Park 2018; Kim 2016; Wong 2015) and by the role of the United States and Japan in international politics (Ahn 2019a; 2019b; 2021; Byun 2021). Conventional research neglects this link between security and the economy. Further, most studies of Chinese foreign policy making take it for granted that the CCP controls the process. But looking at the procedure only from that perspective does not capture the whole picture (Whiting

1983); local voices and public opinion may also affect Chinese foreign policy formation (Son and Yim 2021).

Three interconnected contingents determine foreign policy in China: top state-level policy bureaucrats, think tanks, and grassroots groups. In this hierarchy, multiple experts and intermediate groups constitute the middle rung and serve to connect the Chinese people, who constitute the grassroots bottom rung, to the most powerful political groups in the top rung. We need to look at China's response to South Korea's deployment of THAAD in the context of the interconnectedness of these three layers. Here we go beyond the dichotomy of the existing literature that divides China's foreign policy into domestic and foreign dimensions, overlooking the complexity of the policy-making process.

III. Research Method and Data

The Q methodology facilitates the study of the subjectivity of humans (Brown 1993). It has been characterized as the most sophisticated method for exploring subjectivity in government and management decision making, especially with respect to complex issues where achieving consensus is difficult (Brown, 2019). The advantage of the Q methodology is that it helps identify actors' multiple viewpoints, opinions, motives, values, and attitudes. While quantitative research attempts to analyze phenomena through many samples, qualitative research carries out an in-depth subjective analysis of a small sample. This study uses the Q methodology to examine Chinese policy makers as the determinants in China's response to the sensitive political issue of THAAD deployment. While variable-oriented methodologies are robust, enabling researchers to discover common patterns among various viewpoints, they do not facilitate the uncovering of distinctive subjective preferences as Q methodology does.

The sample's composition comprises sixteen people, nine professors who teach international politics at three Chinese universities and seven civil servants in the Asian regional office of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, experts whose opinions influence China's foreign policy. These professors and civil employees are leading specialists in US-Chinese relations and the Korean Peninsula and are directly involved in decision-making and are regularly consulted on related diplomatic policies. Despite the relatively small sample, it is representative of the population and highly reliable. We conducted both email and face-to-face interviews. We maintained confidentiality, which made it possible to have serious discussions with civil employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

We began interviewing in March 2019 and continued for six months. We held

preliminary in-depth interviews with two experts before we devised the Q statements. We designed Q statements about domestic factors in China, such as nationalism, the political system, and political propaganda, and international factors, such as disputes between China and the United States and the revival of the Chinese nation.

In the end, we devised thirty-four Q statements. The respondents were instructed to classify their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement using a Rickert scale from -4 to +4, respectively, -4 equaling strongly disagree and +4 equaling strongly agree (the Appendix lists all the Q statements). Our findings revealed five different perspectives among our respondents regarding how Chinese foreign policy is developed. The first is that it is state driven, the second is that it is grassroots based, the third is that it is grounded in public deliberation, the fourth is that it is a competitive response to US expansion strategy, and the fifth is that it functions as a coalition between state and society.

IV. Interpretation and Discussion: Key Factors of Chinese Foreign Policy Making

A. State-Driven Perspective

The idea that China's foreign policy-making process is a top-down one led by the state and the Communist Party (see Table 1) is one view that emerges from the way our respondents categorized the Q statements in the survey. According to this view, the central government should lead opposition to the deployment of THAAD independently of local governments and without considering public opinion. This perspective strongly opposes the idea that public opinion should influence the Chinese government's foreign policy decisions. Other statements representing this perspective that respondents agreed with emphasize that China should actively respond to US expansion, maintain a close alliance with North Korea, and oppose South Korea's deployment of THAAD, even if doing so incurs economic losses. This view also strongly disagrees that China sought to retaliate against South Korea for deploying THAAD by leveraging the high level of mutual economic dependence between South Korea and China.

Table 1. State-Driven Perspective

Q Statement	Factor 1
Q33: China must implement a counterattack strategy against US expansionary foreign policy in Asia.	1.70
Q25: China needs to provide military aid to North Korea to maintain its influence.	1.55
Q24: Since China has a blood alliance with North Korea, checking North Korea through THAAD deployment is like checking China.	1.45
Q31: China's anti-South Korea foreign policy due to the deployment of THAAD is not aimed at South Korea per se but is rather a means of retaliation against the United States.	1.34
Q13: National security is the top priority of the Xi administration in all national affairs.	1.23
Q32: The Chinese government opposes the THAAD system's deployment on the Korean Peninsula because it prioritizes maintaining international peace.	1.22
Q8: The Chinese cultivated anti-South Korean sentiment long before the THAAD controversy.	-1.00
Q27: South Korea's growing presence and development and strengthening of its defense capabilities pose a potential risk to China.	-1.17
Q15: The Chinese government's post-THAAD policy against South Korea was prompted by voluntary acts of local government and residents that the central government did not intervene in or control.	-1.56
Q3: Due to the unprecedented centralization carried out by the Xi Jinping administration, the regulations imposed on certain Korean companies have been strengthened and expanded across the board.	-1.61
Q6: China's rising economic power allows the Chinese government to use economic retaliation as a diplomatic policy tool against South Korea, which is highly dependent on China for its trade.	-1.64
Q28: Currently, China does not have a military force comparable to that of the United States, so it has no choice but to respond with economic retaliation.	-1.67
Q5: The CCP represents the interests of the Chinese public and cannot ignore its opinion.	-2.15

Note: Z scores represent a range from strongly agree (+4) to neutral (0) to strongly disagree (-4).

B. Grassroots Voice-Based Perspective

A second perspective that emerges from the data illustrates that the opposition to the deployment of THAAD in China comes from voluntary mass protests and social movements (see Table 2). Even under the communist regime, grassroots voices can be heard in certain policy processes (Hu et al. 2018; Wang and Liu, 2020), suggesting that grassroots nationalism rather than top-down patriotism directs China's response to THAAD deployment. This perspective emphasizes that the US deployment of THAAD on the Korean Peninsula is a US defense strategy against North Korean nuclear weapons rather than an anti-Chinese move on the part of South Korea, but that even still, it may pose a significant threat to China. This pattern of responses to the relevant Q statements suggests that if it becomes clear that the deployment of THAAD in South Korea does not threaten China's security, a diplomatic solution may emerge.

Table 2. Grassroots-Based Perspective

Q Statement	Factor 2
Q30: The US deployment of THAAD on the Korean Peninsula is intended not only to serve as a defense strategy against North Korean nuclear weapons but also as a means of strengthening US security interventions in China and Asia.	2.01
Q15: The Chinese government's post-THAAD policy against South Korea was prompted by voluntary acts of local government and residents that the central government did not intervene in or control.	1.36
Q26: The Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and South Korea is designed to contain China, North Korea, and Russia.	1.36
Q16: The deployment of THAAD on the Korean Peninsula conflicts with China's strategic goal of disarmament.	1.21
Q27: South Korea's growing presence and development and strengthening of its defense capabilities pose a potential risk to China.	1.21
Q14: China's power elite, headed by Xi Jinping, believes external expansion is the means to achieving a "Great China."	1.11
Q25: China needs to provide military aid to North Korea to maintain its influence.	1.11
Q1: China's one-party political system facilitates expeditious decision-making on the part of the CCP.	-1.09
Q12: The influence of special political groups played a role in China's foreign policy against South Korea in the wake of the THAAD deployment.	-1.14
Q23: The relationship between China and North Korea is more strategic and vital than between China and South Korea.	-1.14
Q3: Due to the unprecedented centralization carried out by the Xi Jinping administration, the regulations imposed on certain Korean companies have been strengthened and expanded across the board.	-1.39
Q13: National security is the top priority of the Xi administration in all national affairs.	-1.39
Q24: Since China has a blood alliance with North Korea, checking North Korea through THAAD deployment is like checking China.	-1.39
Q10: The closed decision-making process modeled by the Xi Jinping leadership allows the CCP to engage in top-down policy making before the general public has reached a consensus.	-1.49
Q21: The Chinese government opposes the deployment of THAAD in South Korea on the grounds that it could further stimulate North Korea's nuclear development.	-1.49

Note: Z scores represent a range from strongly agree (+4) to neutral (0) to strongly disagree (-4).

C. Public Deliberation Perspective

A third view is that the central government and the Chinese public have each have their own ideas about foreign policy (see Table 3). From this perspective, the Chinese government did not intervene in the protests of the Chinese masses against South Korea's deployment of THAAD; that is, the Chinese government did not orchestrate the social movement against the deployment of THAAD. Further, the opposition to the THAAD deployment in China is not based on anti-South Korean sentiment or Chinese populism but instead is the result of rational debate and deliberation. This viewpoint emphasizes

that China's public opposes South Korea's deployment of THAAD because it threatens peace and security in Asia. At the same time, the Chinese government has a different take and seeks to counterattack what it regards as a US expansion strategy.

Table 3. Public Deliberation Perspective

Q Statement	Factor 3
Q4: The Chinese government tolerates public boycotts and does not interfere with anti-South Korean activities.	1.87
Q22: Reducing or eliminating informal economic aid to North Korea is necessary.	1.86
Q25: China needs to provide military assistance to North Korea to maintain its influence.	1.48
Q34: China must exercise its influence externally through its "one belt, one road" policy if it seeks to play a pivotal role in reestablishing the world order.	1.36
Q32: The Chinese government opposes the THAAD system's deployment on the Korean Peninsula because it prioritizes maintaining international peace.	1.05
Q29: As the US government initiated the THAAD system's deployment to South Korea, there was no conflict between China and South Korea.	1.03
Q16: The deployment of THAAD on the Korean Peninsula conflicts with China's strategic goal of disarmament.	-1.11
Q15: The Chinese government's post-THAAD policy against South Korea was prompted by voluntary acts of local government and residents that the central government did not intervene in or control.	-1.12
Q33: China must implement a counterattack strategy against US expansionary foreign policy in Asia.	-1.43
Q2: The magnitude of the Chinese government's anti-South Korea policy and the speed with which the policy was implemented was surprising.	-1.51
Q1: China's one-party political system facilitates expeditious decision-making on the part of the CCP.	-1.69
Q9: The growth of the Chinese IT industry facilitates wide dissemination of public opinion.	-1.75

Note: Z scores represent a range from strongly agree (+4) to neutral (0) to strongly disagree (-4).

D. Rival Actor Perspective

A fourth perspective is that China should act as a model for the region by becoming a rival actor to the United States, thereby challenging its claim to global power (see Table 4). This viewpoint identifies China and the United States as the two world competitors. and sees China's opposition to the US strategy of expansion in Asia as grounded in its perception of its status as a rival world leader. According to this view, the goal of the US deployment of THAAD in South Korea was to monitor and encircle China, not North Korea, with a radar surveillance network. Therefore, it is natural that China should seek to protect its national security interests by opposing the deployment. This perspective also emphasizes that the backlash of the Chinese people stems from long-accumulated

anti-South Korean sentiment. This perspective suggests that both the Chinese public and the members of the power elite are disturbed by America's Asian expansion policy and wary of South Korea's growth.

Table 4. *Rival Actor Perspective*

Q Statement	Factor 4
Q31: China's anti-South Korea foreign policy due to the deployment of THAAD is not aimed at South Korea per se but is rather a means of retaliation against the United States.	2.62
Q8: The Chinese cultivated anti-South Korean sentiment long before the THAAD deployment controversy.	1.70
Q18: Chinese local governments only have executive power regarding the central government's decisions, making it difficult for local governments to make autonomous decisions.	1.51
Q24: Since China has a blood alliance with North Korea, checking North Korea through THAAD deployment is like checking China.	1.36
Q13: National security is the top priority of the Xi administration in all national affairs.	1.26
Q34: China must exercise its influence externally through its "one belt, one road" policy if it seeks to play a pivotal role in reestablishing the world order.	-1.04
Q32: The Chinese government opposes the THAAD system's deployment on the Korean Peninsula because it prioritizes maintaining international peace.	-1.10
Q22: Reducing or eliminating informal economic aid to North Korea is necessary.	-1.29
Q2: The magnitude of the Chinese government's anti-South Korea policy and the speed with which the policy was implemented was surprising.	-1.86
Q21: The Chinese government opposes the deployment of THAAD in South Korea on the grounds that it could further stimulate North Korea's nuclear development.	-1.91

Note: Z scores represent a range from strongly agree (+4) to neutral (0) to strongly disagree (-4).

E. State-Society Coalition Perspective

A fifth perspective sees foreign policy in China as a social-movement-driven process, the product of a coalition between the state and civil society (see Table 5). This perspective emphasizes that South Korea's opposition to the deployment of THAAD is a foreign policy created jointly by the CCP and the public. According to this view, the state does not take the lead in making foreign policy decisions; rather, diverse alliances among the state, society, and the grass roots are responsible for these decisions. This coalition view appears to be a new pattern of policy process different from the communist-style mass mobilization model of the past. It suggests that the independent influence of scholars and the media in the middle zone between state and society can flourish and that the mass voices of the grassroots level reflect the will of the people rather than the state's coercion.

Table 5. Social-Movement-Driven Perspective

Q Statement	Factor 5
Q13: National security is the top priority of the Xi administration in all national affairs.	1.71
Q7: Nationalistic sentiment among Chinese people is knee jerk, and their patriotism has made large-scale protests and boycotts possible.	1.38
Q16: The deployment of THAAD on the Korean Peninsula conflicts with China's strategic goal of disarmament.	1.38
Q24: Since China has a blood alliance with North Korea, checking North Korea through THAAD deployment is like checking China.	1.38
Q34: China must exercise its influence externally through its "one belt, one road" policy if it seeks to play a pivotal role in reestablishing the world order.	1.09
Q4: The Chinese government tolerates public boycotts and does not interfere with anti-South Korean activities.	-1.07
Q8: The Chinese cultivated anti-South Korean sentiment long before the THAAD controversy.	-1.44
Q17: Anti-South Korean attitudes and boycotts and the spread of protests in China have prompted China's anti-South Korea foreign policy decrees.	-1.49
Q30: The US deployment of THAAD on the Korean Peninsula is intended not only to serve as a defense strategy against North Korean nuclear weapons but also as a means of strengthening US security interventions in China and Asia.	-1.77
Q31: China's anti-South Korea foreign policy due to the deployment of THAAD is not aimed at South Korea per se but is rather of means of retaliation against the United States.	-1.91
Q1: China's one-party political system facilitates expeditious decision-making on the part of the CC.	-2.29

Note: Z scores represent a range from strongly agree (+4) to neutral (0) to strongly disagree (-4).

F. Identifying Overlooked Dimensions of Chinese Foreign Policy Making

These five viewpoints allow us to identify three aspects of the Chinese foreign policy-making process that previous research has neglected. The first two are beliefs about who leads and who participates in the foreign policy process, on the one hand, and beliefs as to whether state and society ought to work independently or interact, on the other (see Figure 1). In connection with the THAAD deployment in South Korea, these beliefs are reflected in opinions about (1) whether opposition to the deployment in China was state led or grassroots based and (2) whether China's foreign policy emerged from a coalition between the state and society or was arrived at independently by each.

The first perspective suggests that China's THAAD foreign policy is top down and state led and that society does not play a role in its formulation. The second indicates that China's THAAD-related foreign policy primarily reflects the grassroots voice of the people, a movement in which the state did not intervene. The third emphasizes that China's THAAD foreign policy reflects the respective positions of the state and society, suggesting that it is not wholly a product of the state-led foreign policy process. The

fourth argues that China's central government and community worked together to articulate China's THAAD foreign policy, which amounted to a strong Chinese national counterattack against the United States' Asian expansion strategy. The fifth likewise suggests that the government and society worked together to create China's THAAD policy. Still, in contradistinction to the fourth, the community is seen as mainly having guided the foreign policy formation in conjunction with the communist government.

The first aspect suggests that on the state-driven view, foreign policy making is the state's sole province, while from a grassroots-based perspective, a coalition shapes it. The second aspect shapes ideas about who leads the Chinese foreign policy-making process: one view is that the state devises and formulates it, a second is that policy bureaucrats and think tanks contribute to developing it, and a third is that through social movements and protests, the people can influence it. The third aspect illustrates the two core contrasting values inherent in China's foreign policy, a hawkish one reflected in an aggressive approach designed to counteract US expansion and dovelike one manifested in a prudent approach that seeks to protect China's national interests without war.

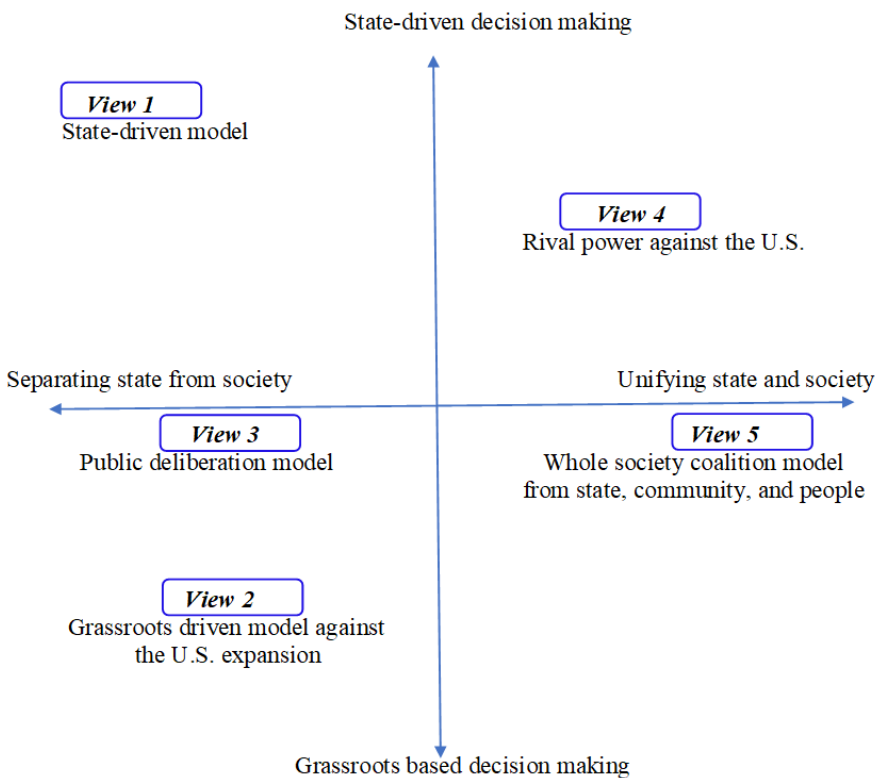


Figure 1. Key Hidden Dimensions of Q-factors in Chinese Foreign Policymaking

V. Conclusions and Further Research

This paper illustrates five perspectives on China's foreign policy process. These five perspectives—the top-down view, the bottom-up one, the rational deliberation one, the power-based one, and the coalition one—coalesce into two categories, one that highlights the competition between state-led or grassroots-led foreign policy approaches and one that emphasizes the separation or conjunction between the state and society.

This paper contributes to China's foreign policy research in two ways. First, it introduces an approach that holistically considers how the lower, middle, and upper levels of Chinese society influence the formulation of China's foreign policy, eschewing the traditional approach that treats it strictly as a top-down process. Second, it indicates how state-led, expert-led, and grassroots-voice-led pathways in foreign policy formation can demonstrate connections between the state and society in diverse coalitions. Third, analysis grounded in Q statements empirically shows how the lower, middle, and upper levels interact in making decisions through empirical surveys of the THAAD deployment.

Future studies could expand on our work by further exploring how the upper, middle, and lower levels connect and interact with each other in their decision making regarding foreign policy. For example, what kind of information do think tanks influential in China's foreign policy provide to Chinese political leaders, how does that information affect their discussions and decisions, and what role does the media, such as the *Global Times*, play? This research illustrates that the Q methodology can play a significant role in exploring the obscured views and attitudes of Chinese policy participants on sensitive political issues. For instance, further research could use Q methodology to identify undisclosed views on various disputes with China over Korea's accession to the IPEF (Indo-Pacific Economic Framework) and the possibility of additional deployment of THAAD.

Our study is limited in its reliance on in-depth interviews with fewer than twenty bureaucrats and Chinese foreign policy scholars. Generalizing this study's empirical findings would require extensive research data, including interviews with more policy experts and bureaucrats. More scientific evidence is necessary to explore the bottom-up pathways through which domestic political actors, such as experts, policy bureaucrats, and civic organizations, influence foreign policy. Furthermore, the theoretical implications of our findings regarding China's foreign policy process can generate further research on foreign policy conflicts between China and Japan and between China and other Asian countries.

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Appendix

Table A1. Factor Loading for Q Samples

Q Statements		Factor				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	China's one-party political system facilitates expeditious decision making on the part of the CCP.	1	-1	-2	0	-4
2	The magnitude of the Chinese government's anti-South Korea policy and the speed with which the policy was implemented was surprising.	1	0	-2	-2	0
3	Due to the unprecedented centralization carried out by the Xi Jinping administration, the regulations imposed on certain Korean companies have been strengthened and expanded across the board.	-1	-2	2	1	0
4	The Chinese government tolerates public boycotts and does not interfere with anti-South Korean activities.	3	2	4	1	-1
5	The CCP represents the interests of the Chinese public and cannot ignore its opinion.	-4	0	3	3	1
6	China's rising economic power allows the Chinese government to use economic retaliation as a diplomatic policy tool against South Korea, which is highly dependent on China for its trade.	-2	2	1	2	3
7	Nationalistic sentiment among Chinese people is knee jerk, and their patriotism has made large-scale protests and boycotts possible.	-1	1	3	3	3
8	The Chinese cultivated anti-South Korean sentiment long before the THAAD deployment controversy.	-1	1	-1	4	-1
9	The growth of the Chinese IT industry facilitates wide dissemination of public opinion.	0	0	-4	2	0
10	The closed decision-making process modeled by the Xi Jinping leadership allows the CCP to engage in top-down policy making before the general public has reached a consensus.	2	-4	0	1	-1
11	There is interference and influence of special interest groups in the policy making of the Chinese leadership.	3	0	3	0	-1
12	The influence of special political groups played a role in China's foreign policy against South Korea in the wake of the THAAD deployment.	0	-1	0	2	2
13	National security is the top priority of the Xi administration in all national affairs.	3	-1	0	3	4
14	China's power elite, headed by Xi Jinping, believes external expansion is the means to achieving a "great China."	2	3	0	3	3
15	The Chinese government's post-THAAD policy against South Korea was prompted by voluntary acts of local government and residents that the central government did not intervene in or control.	-1	4	-1	0	3
16	The deployment of THAAD on the Korean Peninsula conflicts with China's strategic goal of disarmament.	0	3	-1	1	4
17	Anti-South Korean attitudes and boycotts and the spread of protests in China have prompted the government's anti-South Korea foreign policy decrees.	0	2	1	3	-1
18	Chinese local governments only have executive power regarding the central government's decisions, making it difficult for local governments to make autonomous decisions.	2	2	2	4	0

Table A1. Continued

	Q Statements	Factor				
		1	2	3	4	5
19	The Chinese government controls major Chinese media companies through which it coordinates the dissemination of anti-South Korea sentiment.	0	0	1	2	0
20	Since North Korea's nuclear possession does not directly threaten China, the Chinese government doesn't have to cooperate with the international community to deter North Korea.	2	3	0	0	2
21	The Chinese government opposes THAAD deployment in South Korea on the grounds that it could further stimulate North Korea's nuclear development.	2	-2	2	-4	2
22	It is necessary to reduce or eliminate informal economic aid to North Korea.	0	0	4	-2	1
23	The relationship between China and North Korea is more strategic and vital than that between China and South Korea.	1	-1	-1	-1	2
24	Since China has a blood alliance with North Korea, checking North Korea through THAAD deployment is like checking China.	4	-1	2	3	4
25	China needs to provide military aid to North Korea to maintain its influence.	4	3	4	2	0
26	The Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and South Korea is designed to contain China, North Korea, and Russia.	3	4	0	0	2
27	South Korea's growing presence and development and strengthening of its defense capabilities pose a potential risk to China.	-1	3	2	-1	1
28	Currently, China does not have a military force comparable to that of the United States, so it has no choice but to respond with economic retaliation.	-2	2	2	-1	2
29	As the US government initiated the THAAD system's deployment to South Korea, there was no conflict between China and South Korea.	2	3	3	2	2
30	The US deployment of THAAD on the Korean Peninsula is intended not only to serve as a defense strategy against North Korean nuclear weapons but also as a means of strengthening US security interventions in China and Asia.	2	4	2	2	-2
31	China's anti-South Korea foreign policy due to the deployment of THAAD is not aimed at South Korea per se but is rather a means of retaliation against the United States.	3	1	1	4	-2
32	The Chinese government opposes the THAAD system's deployment on the Korean Peninsula because it prioritizes maintaining international peace.	3	2	3	-1	1
33	China must implement a counterattack strategy against US expansionary foreign policy in Asia.	4	1	-1	0	3
34	China must exercise its influence externally through its "one belt, one road" policy if it seeks to play a pivotal role in reestablishing the world order.	1	2	3	-1	3

Note: Z scores represent a range from strongly agree (+4) to neutral (0) to strongly disagree (-4).