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A COMING AGE OF MICRO GAME OF POWER: HISTORY AND REALITY

Abstract: *The traditional theory of international relations, whether it is realism, liberalism, constructivism, or scientific behaviorism, define sovereign states as a unified body in international arena. It has consistent interests, and naturally also has consistent foreign policy goals and means. In the 20th century, and especially during the two World Wars and the Cold War, this conceptual abstraction was very accurate. But after the end of the Cold War, especially in the 21st century, this concept gradually went against the reality of international relations. On the one hand, the comprehensive strength of a country cannot directly transform competitive advantages in specific areas; on the other hand, the main resistance of many countries, including superpowers, may not be to another power, but to different domestic interest groups as well as international non state actors. This has caused traditional international relations theories, from hypotheses to conceptual and inferential levels, to be unable to explain the world today.*

Keywords: *Macro Game of Power, Micro Game of Power, Globalization, Diversification of Hegemonic Interests.*

1. Introduction

Since President Trump took office, China-US relations and the international situation have become more turbulent, although all countries are trying to mobilize their full strengths to obtain a new round of competition or a greater advantage in the world change. But many leaders soon discovered that their

competitors not only came from so-called “strategic competitors,” but also often came from groups with different interests and opinions within their own country, as well as international non state actors. This phenomenon not only plagues the leaders of the contemporary world, but actually weakens the theories of international relations that already face serious challenges. In fact, this problem or phenomenon appeared as early as the end of the Cold War. In the early 1990s, even the most daring scholars or commentators on international issues could not predict the end of the Soviet Union. The reason being that from 1989 to 1991, in the sense of international relations, the Soviet Union was not at the dead end, but at the peak of military and other forces. The Soviet Union failed in its outdated domestic economic and political system, not in economic development and military capacity building in the sense of its sovereign state. This is fundamentally different from the end of World War I and World War II. Therefore, either from the perspective of theory or practice, the traditional international relations theory, the analysis paradigm with sovereign states as the core, faces severe challenges and even needs to be fundamentally adjusted.

2. Traditional Paradigm of International Relations

Analysis: The Macro Game of Power

What is the theory of Macro power games? In the traditional theory of international relations, no matter whether it is realism, liberalism, constructivism, or even behaviorism, the sovereignty state has been defined internationally as a unified actor. In this sense, if a nation-state is an imaginary human community, a sovereign state is an imaginary agent of international relations. Traditional international relations theories are based on sovereign states, and they conceive the state as a strategic whole in the perspective of international relations. Realism emphasizes the persistent tendency of conflicts between states; liberalism looks for ways to mitigate conflicts between states; and progressivism describes how the overall system of international relations can be changed (Doherty, Pfaltzgraf, 2003: 6).

This subject has consistent interests, and naturally also has consistent foreign policy goals and means. During the two world wars and the Cold War, international relations also basically developed following this model. During the two world wars, countries formed different alliance systems and fought against each other in accordance with their own interests. During the Cold War, the world formed the Soviet socialist camp, the American capitalist camp, and the non-aligned movement between them. At that time, the main means of strategic game among big countries was alliance, anti-alliance or re-alliance. Therefore, the United States and the Soviet Union first expanded their alliance groups. After

the alliance group was roughly organized, the focus shifted to anti-alliance or re-alliance. China's diplomacy also started from this line of thinking. The first 20 years (1949-1969) were one-sided to the Soviet Union; after 1971, they sought to fall to the American camp. China uses its own choice of alliance or quasi-alignment to influence the international landscape and ultimately promote the end of the Cold War.

Based on the above-mentioned historical experience, the existing macro theory on the state's foreign behavior generally assumes that the state's foreign behavior is a unified whole, and the conditions of the game between states are absolute and clear. For example, the three major theories of international relations all explain the collective behavior of a country from the perspective of the international system. Although neoclassical realism's research on national foreign policy has more complicated variables, that is, it has increased domestic political considerations, the results of external behavior has been considered as a unified whole. However, this is not the case in international relations practice after the end of the cold war. For example, the frictions between China and the United States in economic and trade relations do not affect the cooperation between the two sides on the North Korean issue. Although the Sino-Indian relations after the "Donglang" (Dokala) incident have generally improved, differences on the border issue still exist. It would be difficult for the dispute with the East China Sea delimitation issue to seriously impede the maintenance of economic and trade relations between the two sides. At the same time, although European countries and China are mutually advancing in adhering to globalization, trade liberalism, and multilateralism, they have pointed themselves at China on the issues of Hong Kong and human rights.

Therefore, in most cases, it is difficult for many countries to make uniform regulations on foreign behavior based on holistic considerations. As a result, international politics has differentiated from a macro game of power into a number of micro games of power at different levels, and the state's diplomatic behavior on different issues and at different levels may be very different, and sometimes even opposite or contradictory. This article argues that we need to modify the traditional assumptions of state external behavior in the sense that the state's external behavior is not uniform, and the game between countries is composed of multiple and decentralized micro power games in multiple areas and levels.

Whether it is the physical capacity emphasized by realism at the level of ontology, the institution emphasized by liberalism, or the concept or mindset emphasized by constructivism, (Gao Qiqi, 2014: 92-93). they all exert their influence mainly through state actors as carriers of power. Essentially, they are state-centered international relations theories. Following the rise of globalization

and informatization, non-state actors and actors in various sectors within the state have gained more power and autonomy. Keohan and Nai have described the weakening of the country's overall power in comparison to multinational corporations, international organizations, and global financial markets in "Power and Interdependence in the Information Age." Susan Strange also points out in the book "Divergence of Power: State and Non-State Authority in the World Economy" that power is transferred from state to market and non-state actors. The theory of international relations, either as three dominant theories or some secondary level theories, has generally switched from a state-centric approach to the direction of decentralized. Therefore, if the game of power is defined as a country-centered theoretical system and policy orientation, then the three major international relationship theories have undergone a process from rise to decline.

3. The characteristics of the Era of Macro Power Game

The macro game theory of power is a state-centered international relations theory, which itself also rises and falls in correlation with the rise and fall of the concept and practice of sovereign states.

3.1. The Theory of Macro Game of Power originated from the Concept of Sovereign State System

Among the three major international relations theories, liberal international relations theory was the earliest. And, since the system of sovereign states had just emerged before the 20th century, it has not become the mainstream order in the world or even in the West at that time. Liberal theory is similar to the tributary system in the East. They tend to regard international affairs as an extension of domestic affairs, and they also tend to observe international issues from the perspective of domestic politics. Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Smith, Mueller, Richard Cobden, Bentham and Spencer, and so on, are basically the same (Su Changhe, 2004:16). Because at home, liberals believe that the "invisible hand" can automatically establish order among rational actors; internationally, liberals also believe in this, and believe that the principle of least interference and laissez-faire can be raised on this basis. Come out to interfere with the principles of internal affairs and the principle of national self-determination. However, the two World Wars destroyed the classical era of liberal international relations theory, the era of laissez-faire. For the first time, Wilson brought the idea of "an organized peace" to the practice of international relations after World War I, trying to solve the security problems that plagued Europe by forming a supranational institution above the state (Su Changhe, 2004:18). However, just as Classical Economic Liberalism was challenged by Keynesianism, the World Wars created by the

laissez-faire world had also shaken the foundation of classical liberalism theory, which led to the rise of realist ideas. By the end of the Cold War, liberalism was resurrected and reformed into neo-liberal institutionalism. A basic assumption of neo-liberal institutionalism is that “the state needs to obtain benefits, and to obtain benefits requires international cooperation”(Qin Yaqing, 2013: 183). By this time, liberalism remains central to the state.

3.2. The peak period of the theory of macro game is academic reflection after the two world wars

The theory of realist international relations can be traced back to at least European political realism, and there is a corresponding discussion in the ancient Chinese legalist School (Fajia). However, the theory of realistic international relations originated in the 1920s and 1940s, and was established on the basis of reflection on the causes of the First World War. It is a product of the two World Wars and the Cold War in a certain sense.

From an objective point of view, at this stage, the success or failure of national construction and the strength of national mobilization capacity are important factors that determine a country's international status. The industrial revolution and the era of industrialization it created have made organization and mobilization very important. Good industrial organization capabilities have shaped modern nations and replaced weak ones with strong nations. In ancient countries, the state was generally weak and loosely organized. China is known as the country with the tightest structure in the classical era, but in fact, government organizations are only at and above the county level, and the state of independence or autonomy is still maintained below the county level. The state does not have enough power to control the people, and it must be accomplished through a series of intermediary forces. State control over the economy and the economic capacity of the people is also limited. In the era of precious metal currencies, the state did not have the ability to directly control the economic behavior of the people. However, with the advancement of technology and the emergence of credit currency, the state's ability to control economic activities has been strengthened, and the ability to control the people has also been strengthened. This has led to a stronger government and governance in the modern state system, which has gradually replaced the weak state system. Japan defeated China in the war (1894-1895) not because its economic strength and scale were larger than China, but because it had a modern mobilization system, including a financial system. In this context, the theory of international relations also developed with strengthening of different countries. The theory of realist international relations is the product of this era.

In short, the starting point of the theory of macro power games is the world powers. The means of the game is to form alliances, anti-alliances, or re-alliances. The goal of the game is to destroy the object or the other's alliance system in order to establish or consolidate its own power system. It is the homogeneity or unity of relations among major powers. Under such circumstances, the hostile relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union is comprehensive and both sides will exert all their strength to play games with each other in the form of a whole-government policy. Other areas inconsistent with the hostile relationship are either unimportant or must be subordinated to the major strategic needs of the US and Soviet hostilities. As a subversive work in the era of the macro game of power, classic realism is actually an academic summary of the origins of the two World Wars and the Cold War.

3.3. The Theory of Macro Power Game Declined in the Late Cold War

Besides the fact that the industrial revolution and industrialization have shaped the system of sovereign states, they have also provided a practical basis for the theory of macro games. However, the further development of technology and self-transcendence have in fact deconstructed the strong state system, so that non-state actors have the ability to exist and develop relatively independently of state actors.

On the one hand, the fruits of industrialization are also denying the era of sovereign states that they have created. In particular, nuclear weapons are good example, although their manufacturing and possession still have the attributes of a sovereign state, their use and influence inevitably goes beyond the scope of a sovereign state, causing the sovereign state to create super weapons that it cannot use. This self-denial was undoubtedly manifested during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. The Cuban missile crisis is not only a crisis between the United States and the Soviet Union closest to the real conflict during the Cold War, but also a crisis that almost dragged human society into a nuclear war. This crisis is the peak of realism in theory, but also the beginning of people's rethinking on realism theory.

On the other hand, the end of the Cold War and the new technological revolution also provided new impetus to the evolution of international relations theory. Constructivist's theory of international relations originated from the end of the Cold War. It can be said that without the end of the Cold War, there may not be such a theory of international relations. Realism and liberalism, both classical and new, neither foresaw the end of the Cold War nor could explain the end of the Cold War, and the academic community had the urge to find a new theoretical framework. Constructivism has its own interpretation of the end of

the Cold War: former Soviet President Gorbachev reformed Soviet foreign policy because he had a new concept of “common security.”

Therefore, the traditional theory of international relations is based on a unitary and highly homogeneous entity that can be reduced to the interests of sovereign nations. It is based on the premise that a country can only have one foreign strategy at the given point of time. However, this can no longer explain the world politics in the 21st century and the relations between great powers.

In fact, the development trends of the three major theories are also consistent with this. As the Cold War gradually came to an end and ended, starting in the 1980s, both realism and liberalism were reformed. Neorealism represented by Kenneth Waltz's International Political Theory (1979), and neoliberal institutionalism represented by Robert Keohane's Post Hegemony (1984), became the most concerned theories of international relations since the 1980s. In the 1990s, constructivism arose. All three theories have been developed in the direction of “de-nationalism.”

4. World Politics enters the Era of Micro Games of Power

As can be seen from the above, the theory of macro game of power was born in the era of liberalism before the First World War. It flourished in the two World Wars and the early Cold War, began to decline from the late Cold War, and entered a deeper adjustment phase in the 21st century. However, no matter how it is adjusted, the “state centric” as the core and starting point of international relations theory has not been fundamentally shaken, although this analysis method is no longer suitable for the post-Cold War international relations pattern, and it is even more unsuitable for the world in the 21st century.

First, the end of the Cold War was not only due to the failure of the Soviet Union as a sovereign state in international strategic competition, but also because of the failure of its domestic political economy and social construction. When the Soviet Union collapsed, from the perspective of international relations, the indicators of the Soviet Union were still quite good. From 1980 to 1989, the total GDP of the Soviet Union ranked between 3rd and 7th in the world in terms of nominal exchange rates. Soviet military forces, at least from the outside, reached historical peaks in strategic forces and naval forces. By the mid-1980s, the comprehensive national strength of the Soviet Union surpassed Germany, France, Britain, and Japan (Cheng Enfu, 2007). It was the second largest economic and technological power in the world, and even far stronger than China at that time. It can be said that the role of the Soviet Union as a sovereign state was actually the result of the need for international struggle in the era of industrialization and

was strengthened by the Cold War. There is nothing more successful in turning an agricultural country into an industrial country than the Soviet model (Kotz, 2000: 3). However, in the process of industrialization and the transition to the post-industrialization era, the Soviet model has increasingly failed to adapt to the increasingly diverse domestic interests and needs at both the political and economic levels.

Second, the main threat to world security after the Cold War is not international conflicts but internal conflicts. According to statistics, during the Cold War period, there were 163 domestic armed conflicts worldwide, accounting for 66% of the total number of armed conflicts; after the Cold War (1990-2006), domestic armed conflicts reached 176, accounting for 82% of the total number of conflicts during the same period (Tang Yongsheng, Liu Dongzhe, Chen Xiaodong, 2008: 3). The armed conflicts with the heaviest casualties since the Cold War were also basically characterized as civil wars. Although the Second Congo War (1998-2003) involved some African countries, it originated from internal conflicts; although the Syrian Civil War evolved into an international game, it originated from ethnic and sectarian conflicts. The root causes of Darfur Conflict are ethnic and religious contradictions within Sudan; although the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan began in the form of international conflicts, they also ended up mainly as struggles between different religious factions and ethnic groups within Iraq; Nigeria revolved around combating Boko Haram, etc. The conflict in Iraq is essentially a civil war; the Yemeni civil war and the Ukrainian crisis are also internal conflicts with an international background. None of these armed conflicts can be either fully understood or understood simply by relying on existing international relations theories.

Third, the globalization process led by the United States has had a complex impact on the world and the United States itself. On the one hand, American power has been fully amplified through the process of globalization and has entered many regions and areas that have never been touched by the western powers before. After the end of the Cold War, the United States' dominance in the world reached the highest point in human history and was called a "unipolar moment". This is the first time in the history of mankind that one country obtained a leading edge and decisive influence in all regions and areas of the earth, and it is the first time that a world-class hegemonic country has emerged. The first Gulf War was the best interpretation of the American unipolar moment. On the other hand, the globalization process has also deconstructed US dominance. After hegemony expands to the world, the structure of hegemony and globalization is being overlapped, which not only greatly expanded American power, but also dispelled American hegemony. The hegemony is no longer the

exclusive product of the United States, but has become an international public good, as other countries can use it as long as they join. The hegemony cost is borne by the United States and the international public goods are shared by the world. This asymmetry of rights and obligations has become a self-denying factor in the American hegemony strategy. At the same time, after the globalization of hegemonic interest groups, the consistency with non-hegemonic groups in national interests also declined, or even disappeared. Under such circumstances, a globalized American hegemony can no longer find its own strategic object, and the American hegemony has lost its original strategic value and significance.

Fourth, the process of globalization and informatization has profoundly changed the structure of the world, as well as the relationship between the world structure and the domestic structure. After the end of the Cold War, the original confrontation between the two camps collapsed, and the era when the two sides devoted themselves to a macro game with each other ended. At the same time, the process of globalization has accelerated greatly, the degree of interdependence between countries has deepened, and the interests of internal departments of the country have become more diverse, differentiated and more active. The mutual game between nations is more manifested in specific issues or sectoral areas than in comprehensive confrontation or full cooperation, and the country's foreign behavior is no longer uniform, but it is diversified, decentralized and even contradictory or conflicting internally.

As a result, the diversification of the international actors, the diversification of the field of international relations and the differentiation of the forms of international relations have become the main characteristics that dominate world politics. The direction of major countries' foreign strategies is no longer single and clear. Macro-level grand strategies are becoming more and more difficult to formulate, and policy disputes and controversies reflected at the specific implementation level, and the contradictions between different policy departments have gradually increased. Moreover, this phenomenon does not occur in specific countries, but occurs simultaneously within many world powers.

These phenomena together point out that major methods, forms, and results of games among powers have also undergone macro changes. World politics has entered the era of micro games and micro-narratives. In the era of micro games of power, effort to establish a macro theory to explain world politics is doomed to fail; effort to establish a national grand strategy and overall policy to comprehensively guide internal affairs and diplomacy is counterfactual and cannot succeed.

5. A new International Theory of Micro Games of Power

In the era of micro games of power, the macro strategic game methods, which are characterized by inter-state alliance, anti-alignment and re-alliance, have been replaced by the micro-strategic game methods developed around the strategic borderline between countries.

First, the player of the game, like the game of power, is mainly a world power. Although in the micro-sphere, small and medium-sized countries still have more say, but in the end, it is still the world power that plays a decisive role. However, in the unified form of the game of power with the state as a single subject, the micro game of power emphasizes the diversification or decentralization of the players involved in the game within the power. In the era of macro games, the power game is played by the strategic or security team represented by the head of state. In the era of micro games, power games are played by different departments and organizations in the country, which is a complex game.

Secondly, the goal of the micro game is ultimately the same as the macro game of power, in order to weaken the opponent's overall strength and even push the opponent to collapse in order to enhance hegemony or to increase international political power. But in specific terms, there are big differences. In the era of macro games, gains and losses are significant, and wins and losses are easily defined and identified, and are easily understood by the public. But in the era of micro games, the relationship between gain and loss is uncertain and winning or losing is not easy to define and identify. The game is played on different fronts. In fact, the goal of the micro game is not to weaken the opponent's overall strength, nor to promote the collapse of the opponent, but to push the strategic border line harmful to the opponents, to expand one's own scope of power by reducing the opponent's scope. Lots of incremental small wins prepare for the final victory in constant game.

Thirdly, the field of game has changed, from a game that is dominated by geographic space to a game that is dominated by issues and domain space. As the geographical space between nations, including the concepts and rights relevant to territories, territorial seas and airspace, has been well defined and regulated, it is difficult to carry out strategic games at this level. Therefore, in the era of micro games of power, strategic games take the international public domain as the main space, such as the high seas, outer space, networks, rules and domains, and so on.

Finally, the form of the game is complicated. The relationship between offensive and defensive among countries is not clear and uniform, but different since various subject areas are different. This is profoundly reflected in the relationship

between China and the United States and by what is going on between China and India.

6. Conclusion

The advent of the era of micro games of power has very important theoretical and policy significance. Especially at the policy level, this actually shows the impossibility of formulating and implementing macro-strategies based on sovereign states. Due to the multiple and multi-layered nature of national interests, it is difficult for any country to regulate and guide all its external behaviors through a single national grand strategy. The grand strategy has gradually retreated from an operable policy to a highly generalized strategic principle. Under this principle, the different departments, strata, and interest groups that constitute a sovereign state play games along different fronts and in different directions according to their own interests, needs and behavioral characteristics. The gross national interest and strength is reflected by the sum of gains or losses in diverse games.

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DOLAZEĆE DOBA MIKRO IGRE MOĆI: ISTORIJA I STVARNOST

Rezime

Tradicionalna teorija međunarodnih odnosa, bilo da je to realizam, liberalizam, konstruktivizam ili naučni biheviorizam, definiše suverene države kao jedinstveno telo u međunarodnoj areni. Ima konzistentne interese, a naravno i konzistentne spoljnopolitičke ciljeve i sredstva. U 20.veku, a posebno tokom dva svetska rata i hladnog rata, ova konceptualna apstrakcija bila je veoma tačna. Ali nakon završetka hladnog rata, posebno u 21. veku, ovaj koncept je postepeno išao u suprotnost sa stvarnošću međunarodnih odnosa. S jedne strane, sveobuhvatna snaga zemlje ne može direktno transformisati konkurentne prednosti u određenim oblastima; s druge strane, glavni otpor mnogih zemalja, uključujući supersile, možda nije druga sila, već različite domaće interesne grupe kao i međunarodni nedržavni akteri. To je uzrokovalo da tradicionalne teorije međunarodnih odnosa, od hipoteza do konceptualnog i inferencijalnog nivoa, danas nisu u stanju objasniti svet.

Ključne reči: makro igra moći, globalizacija, diverzifikacija hegemonskih interesa.