**International political psychology: path reconstruction and method innovation**

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Since the end of the Cold War, theoretical research on international political psychology has progressed in two aspects. On the one hand, with the rise of big data and Internet intelligent space, the data of leaders' political psychology and international relations strategic interaction psychology analysis has diversified; on the other hand, influenced by the "new behaviorism" revolution, new methods and technical applications of international political psychology and behavior are increasing, such as experimental simulations and survey data. In this context, whether the traditional qualitative research based on concepts and type analysis, historical case logic comparison and other methodologies are still the necessary cornerstones of theoretical innovation in international political psychology is a question that needs to be thought about and answered.

**Rational Assumption Reconstruction**

　　The theoretical explanation of international political psychology has a logical starting point in further relaxing the rationality assumption, which is more in line with the basic assumptions of human behavior and state behavior. This comes directly from the classic definition of rational people by Antony Downs, the founder of rational choice theory. He defines rational people as actors who exclude non-rational factors such as emotions and personality and complex motivations. Therefore, the rational preferences of actors are given and constant. In this regard, drawing on experimental research in psychology and scientific analysis of human behavior, international political psychology has refined the opposite "limited rationality" assumption, which is more in line with the basic characteristics of human and social behavior. In this sense, the theory of international political psychology is a theory that is more in line with facts and has more explanatory and predictive power. The "limited rationality" of actors stems from the following factors.

　　First, cognitive bias. In the pure rational assumption, the cognition and decision-making of actors are based on sufficient information and complete and excellent cognitive abilities, so the cognition of actors on each other's preferences and their interactions are a priori given, which also means that under rational thinking, the optimal option is the most rational choice for countries and leaders. Under the influence of the cognitive revolution, international political psychology scholars have reconstructed the rational assumptions of actors and proposed that due to important cognitive mechanisms, the cognition and judgment of actors have inherent biases, that is, the existing cognitive structure will shape expectations and thus affect correct cognition. In this regard, the early cognitive school represented by Robert Jervis systematically sorted out why countries without the intention of war went to unintended war results from the perspective of cognitive bias.

　　Second, emotion-driven. Humans are not only purely cognitive-driven animals, but are also influenced by their own emotions and feelings. Emotions shape people's internal needs and driving forces, thereby affecting the basic positions, practical needs, and judgment choices of actors. The renewed focus on the shaping role of emotions in cognitive biases in psychology is reflected in the cognitive theory of international politics. Scholars represented by Richard Lebow systematically analyze how the emotions of leaders and the political needs based on them lead to deviations in national cognition and decision-making. Based on the early emphasis on the irrationality of emotions, that is, the influence of their promoting role in cognitive biases, since the beginning of the new century, discussions on the rational function of emotions have become increasingly important in international political psychology. For example, Todd Hall systematically studied the emotional expressions of anger, guilt, and sympathy in countries. Therefore, emotional factors reconstruct the classic rational choice assumption in different dimensions.

　　Third, information context. Different understandings of information context have become the fundamental divergence between international political psychology and the rationalist approach. The rationalist approach holds the premise of insufficient information and believes that rational countries will intentionally hide or distort their own private information such as their capabilities, determination, and willingness in order to gain strategic advantages. This strategic deception often causes conflicts or even wars between rational countries. It also explains why countries still start wars even though the results of wars cannot obtain absolute benefits. This is to attribute the information asymmetry between countries to the selfishness and strategic deception of rational countries. This rationalist explanation of war is represented by James Fearon. However, in the view of international political psychology scholars, information asymmetry between countries does not come from the intentional strategic deception of rational countries, but may be more from many cognitive biases. In addition, the internal private information of actors is objectively difficult to accurately recognize. Therefore, under the basic assumption of information asymmetry, the explanation of conflict or war in international political psychology focuses more on the role of the internal psychological variables and mechanisms of actors.

**Core concept innovation**

　　Innovations in the core conceptual dimensions of international political psychology can provide more explanatory and precise tools for describing and explaining international political facts. They can also help us understand how psychological factors affect international political phenomena and purely rational concepts, which ignore the rich psychological dimensions of real politics and fail to reveal the essence and diversity of actors and their relationships.

　　First, the conceptualization of new facts. The emergence of some important new facts in international politics, such as the emergence of new leaders and changes in important bilateral relations, requires researchers to refine more precise academic concepts. At the level of micro-actors and their interactions, the traditional qualitative path theory of international political psychology takes the conceptual innovation at this level as a basic task. For example, as an important micro-analysis unit that affects a country's foreign relations and international relations, the personality traits and cognitive style of new leaders need new conceptualization. Some important leaders, such as the new president of the United States, have provided material for academic efforts in this area, and have also spawned research on important personality traits and their diplomatic influence. Furthermore, in terms of the cognitive style and strategic thinking traits of leaders and countries, some new cases have brought inspiration for the reconstruction of traditional trait theory.

　　Second, the integration of mainstream concepts. As mentioned above, the emergence of new facts in international politics is always slow. Therefore, the existing mainstream research concepts, including psychological concepts, can mostly meet the needs of international political psychology research. However, in the academic development process from the proposer to the user, some classic concepts have "concept travel" and "misuse". In addition, with the various changes and transfers of international relations phenomena at the global level, some classic concepts need to be "corrected" and the concept analysis strengthened.

　　Third, the empowerment of rational concepts. Psychological concepts and variables are inherently relative to rational variables. Therefore, in the traditional qualitative path theory and its innovation process, most people hold a scientific philosophy of competitive paradigm innovation, extracting psychological explanatory variables and mechanisms that are more effective than rationalist explanations. This competitive explanatory model innovation under the perspective of binary opposition is the basic model of the traditional qualitative path. However, the traditional qualitative path also pays more attention to the integration of rational and psychological concepts, exploring the "psychological empowerment" of rational concepts, so that such explanatory variables are more conducive to capturing the multidimensional attributes of international political phenomena. For example, in Jonathan Mercer's important theoretical research, he believes that rationalism involves important variables of actors, such as cognition, preference, belief, and identity, which are driven by important psychological factors of actors. For example, he demonstrated emotional beliefs and their influence on leaders' behavioral choices, and extracted their important influence mechanisms. The second integration of rationality and psychology is reflected in the distinction between the behavioral choices and relationship interactions of actors into different stages, that is, after incorporating the time dimension, the rational presuppositions of actors will show stage characteristics.

**The enduring vitality of traditional paths**

　　The traditional qualitative approach to international political psychology aims to introduce psychological variables and provide a paradigm that is different from rationalist explanations and more explanatory. On this basis, the selection of causal variables and their influencing mechanisms, from leaders' personality traits and cognitive biases to emotional expression and signal presentation in strategic interactions, have become important sources favored by the traditional qualitative approach. Subsequently, the verification of this important causal variable and its mechanism has traditionally been mostly diplomatic historical cases and their comparative analysis. In the process of identifying leaders' psychological variables, important quantitative measurement techniques will also be appropriately introduced.

　　At present, the theoretical innovation of international political psychology, from the perspective of path and method, is more comprehensive and diversified, that is, the micro-variable analysis of leaders' diplomatic decision-making and strategic interaction in international politics, which combines traditional qualitative logic analysis with text content analysis, experimental research, quantitative analysis and other techniques that are more applicable in international political research. The diversity and integration of methodology needs to serve the generation of research problems and problem awareness, which is based on the observation of phenomena and reflection on problems from the perspective of mainstream international political psychology theory, because only observation with theory can trigger corresponding research confusion. In this regard, the assumption deliberation, inference and induction, type analysis, and concept innovation emphasized by the traditional path of international political psychology are still the premise and foundation of its theoretical research, and still have lasting vitality.

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