Title: Li Xing and Geng Jie’s Small Foreign Countries from the Perspective of “Asymmetric Attention”

Abstract: The coexistence of large and small countries and the majority of small countries is an objective fact and long-term trend that has existed in the international society since the emergence of the modern international system. In situations where the scale of power and psychological cognition are different, "asymmetric attention" will arise between large and small countries due to differences in power and influence. Under the perspective of "asymmetric attention", small countries can rely on a variety of diplomatic models such as balanced diplomacy, group diplomacy, alliance diplomacy, neutral diplomacy, etc. to alleviate the "asymmetric" situation between them and big countries and improve their own autonomy. Diplomatic behavior of small countries It has the characteristics of flexibility, morality, institutionality, hierarchy and practicality. Based on the characteristics of small country diplomacy, China, as a developing country, must uphold the spirit of a community with a shared future for mankind and abandon the concept of "small countries" in promoting diplomacy with small countries. There is no inertia and traditional thinking of "weak countries have no diplomacy", understand the mentality of small countries, respect the interests and status of small countries, establish the awareness that "all countries are equal, big or small", adhere to the concept of balancing justice and interests, peace and common development, and pay attention to the diplomacy of small countries The construction of a theoretical system promotes the formation of a community with a shared future for countries large and small. Major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics does not only refer to diplomacy between major countries. Diplomacy with small countries is also an integral and important part of major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics.

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Text:

There are many small countries in the international society, but they are affected by the "big country is the international Influenced by the impression of "main actors in society", international relations research has always analyzed interactions between countries from the perspective of big countries, neglecting the study of small countries. This is especially true of mainstream Western international relations theories, especially realist international relations theory. Edward Carr once proposed that "big power dictatorship" is the natural law of international society, and the diplomacy of small countries must follow the foreign policies of big countries. John Mearsheimer, a representative figure of offensive realism, pointed out clearly at the outset in "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics": "This theory focuses on big countries, because big countries have the greatest impact on changes in international politics. All countries - Whether it is a major power or a sub-power - its fate fundamentally depends on the decisions and actions of the most powerful countries." But with the emergence and evolution of the Westphalian system, the end of the two world wars, and the rise of national With the rise of the liberation movement and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, more and more small countries have entered the international stage and have had an important impact on the world political process. Therefore, it is necessary to study small countries. Wouter P. Veenendaal and others have proposed that studying small countries can bring huge intellectual returns to international relations and foreign policy research. However, compared with Europe, my country's research on small countries started relatively late. The research results mainly focus on analyzing the diplomacy of Southeast Asian and South Asian countries and also provide relevant policy suggestions for my country's small country diplomacy. Speaking from experience, big countries and small countries in the international community pay different attention to each other, which makes the foreign policies formulated by the two sides also be different. In view of this, this article starts from the perspective of small countries and analyzes the diplomacy of small countries based on the theory of "asymmetric attention" model and characteristics, and on this basis try to provide corresponding policy suggestions for China's small country diplomacy. As a large developing country and a rising emerging economy, China has a large number of small countries surrounding it, and there are also many small countries along the “Belt and Road”. Therefore, the study of small countries is particularly necessary and urgent.

What is a small country? The public usually divides countries based on their territorial size. A small country is a small country. This is the simplest and most intuitive method. However, there is currently no consensus on the definition of small countries in the academic community. Scholars generally start from the state of "small" and define small countries roughly from two paths: absolute and relative. The absolute perspective defines "small" by measuring some indicators, and its understanding of small countries is more objective; while the relative perspective focuses more on correlation or "impression" factors, and its understanding is more subjective.

From an absolute perspective, relevant institutions and scholars will set up some indicators to classify the size of a country, such as the size of the country's territory, population size, and economic development level. However, different institutions or individuals determine different values for the selected indicators. of. For example, regarding population, some scholars believe that countries with a population of less than 10 million or 15 million are small countries; the Forum of Small States (FOsS) stipulates that the population of small countries should not exceed 1,000,000; the EU stipulates the upper limit of the population of small countries. It is 3 million; and the World Bank and the Commonwealth Secretariat (The Commonwealth Secretariat) believe that countries with a population of less than 1.5 million are small countries.

In view of this, scholars try to use two or more criteria to classify country size. For example, David Vital once combined population and gross domestic product (GDP) to define small countries, believing that the population is between 10 million and 15 million, and the per capita GDP is greater than 300. Countries with US dollars are more economically developed countries; countries with a population between 20 million and 30 million and a per capita GDP of less than US$300 are considered economically less developed countries. Clive Archer and Neil Nugent combined population and territorial area to classify EU member states into large countries, medium countries, small countries and micro-states.

However, this method of quantifying relevant indicators has its limitations, because determining which node to use to distinguish the size of a country is a technical problem, and the number of small countries obtained by different numerical nodes is different. Moreover, with the development of globalization and science and technology, the judgment of the size of a country must not only consider the numerical value of relevant indicators, but also the quality of relevant indicators, such as the education level of the population and the degree of military development. At present, European scholars use the method of dividing country size through quantitative indicators most widely in academia. The purpose is to determine the size of EU member states so that they can obtain a clear list when studying small EU countries. This means that the distinction standard is effective when applied within the EU region, but when extended to the international level, its effectiveness will be reduced. The relative perspective incorporates subjective factors, focuses on the influence of "relationship" and cognition, eliminates absolutes, and comprehensively considers the role of various factors.

"Small" may make sense visually, but as a concept, it doesn't make sense unless it is considered in relation to other countries. Diana Panke believes that scale is essentially a relational concept, and "size" is just the characteristic of one reference object relative to another reference object. Arjun Appadurai pointed out that the existence of a country will have meaning only if it is located in a system of relationships. For example, when we analyze a small island country, we explain it by analyzing its relationship with neighboring countries, rather than just focusing on the small island country. Moreover, a small country's perception of its own status (whether it realizes that it is small) also affects its relations with neighboring countries and the world.

On the other hand, in international relations, judging a country's "bigness" or "smallness" is usually linked to its power, influence and other factors. However, these factors cannot be directly quantified, which requires the relevant countries to perceive it themselves. and definition. Robert O. Keohane believes that countries that cannot act alone or cannot have an impact on the international system are small countries; Robert L. Rothstein points out that small countries cannot obtain security by relying on their own capabilities. They must obtain security from Basically rely on the help of other countries and institutions. “A country is a small country if it is generally considered small by a country, people and institutions, or if it is considered small by any other country, people or institutions.”

Like the concept of "big country", "small country" is also a relative concept and is actually variable. Although "small" is often associated with "weak", "small" does not necessarily mean "weak". "Small" is a relative concept. In the international community, there are countries such as "small strong" countries, "large weak" countries, political "small strong" countries, and military "large weak" countries. These expressions are all relative and related to the fields involved. The "smallness" of a small country is related to a specific time and space background, and is not a general characteristic of a small country; a country may be weak in one set of relationships, but strong in another set of relationships. For example, Singapore, based on its territorial area and population Defined by quantity, it is indeed a small country; but if calculated based on per capita GDP, Singapore is an economic powerhouse in Southeast Asia.

From the above analysis, we can see that the method of defining small countries from a relative perspective takes into account more judgment criteria. This method involves a qualitative evaluation of a country and its broader international relations. The more detailed the relevant criteria are considered, the more "small" it will be. The validity of the definition will be higher. After all, the current international system is unprecedentedly peaceful, institutionalized, and economically open. This may mean that we have overestimated the importance of factors such as population, territory, and economy in defining small countries. Therefore, it is necessary to define small countries from a multi-factor perspective. The aim was to identify the broader factors associated with "smallness ". In view of this, Baldur Thorhallsson combined internal factors and external factors of the country and proposed a multi-factor framework to define small European countries, including fixed size (population and territory), sovereign scale (international influence , the country's ability to maintain effective sovereignty over its territory and maintain minimal state structures), political size (military capabilities, administrative capabilities, degree of domestic cohesion, and the degree to which the country has access to an external united front), economic size (gross domestic product, market scale and development achievements), cognitive scale (domestic and foreign actors’ views of the country), and preference scale (ruling elites’ ambitions, priorities, and perceptions of the international system). Raimo Vayrynen established subjective and objective standards and combined this standard with endogenous and exogenous factors to classify the size of countries (see Table 1).

1 Standard for measuring the size of a country

Source: RaimoVayrynen,OntheDefinitionandMeasurementofSmallPowerStatus,,Vol.6No.1,1971,p.93

The absolute angle and relative angle definition methods provide different interpretation paths for small countries based on their respective judgment standards. In fact, the two methods are complementary rather than antagonistic. Relevant scholars decide which definition method to adopt based on research needs. It is so difficult to define small countries. On the one hand, it is because of the diversity, complexity and difference of the small countries. On the other hand, it is because of the variability, relativity and abstraction of the concepts of big countries and small countries. Therefore, research on small countries must comprehensively consider various factors. In summary, according to the research needs, the small countries in this article are based on power and influence, based on the dual relationship of one country's influence on another country (mainly between large countries and small countries), comprehensively considering relevant factors, and from a relative perspective To be defined, it mainly refers to countries that are disadvantaged in terms of territorial size, resource volume, national strength and influence. In order to safeguard their own survival, development and interests and avoid national losses, small countries carry out diplomatic activities among international actors, including major powers, and in the international community, which is small country diplomacy.

2. Theoretical logic of small country diplomacy:

"Asymmetric attention"

Theoretically, there will be a symmetry relationship between countries. This symmetry does not refer to the absolute equality between countries, but to a state of interaction between countries, that is, what country A can do to country B, Similarly, country B can treat country A in the same way. But in practice, asymmetry is the norm in international society. In most cases, there is a large power gap between countries. Big countries can do things to small countries that small countries cannot do to big countries. Regarding the interaction between big countries and small countries in the field of international relations, we can use the "asymmetry attention" theory proposed by Brantly Womack to understand it, which explains the small countries to a certain extent. diplomatic behavior.

This theory combines power structure factors from structural realism (size) with factors from cognitive psychology (asymmetric attention) to propose that differences in power between countries create a system of opinions and interests between large and small countries. sexual differences. The main point of this theory is that large countries have more power while small countries face more threats. This structural factor causes small countries to pay too much attention to bilateral relations with large countries, while large countries will ignore some details in their relations with small countries. This This creates differences in actions between the two parties, ultimately leading to misunderstandings and conflicts. In short, the interest structure implicit in "asymmetry" leads to differences in cognition and behavior.

in Figure 1, in the interactive relationship between big country A and small country B, every move of big country A attracts the attention of small country B. From the perspective of attention, we can also see that small country B pays more attention than big country A. The angle should be large. Because big country A has more power than small country B, big country A has a greater impact on small country B than small country B has on big country A, and in the face of benefits and risks, small country B gets relatively less benefit or loss from it. The ratio is also higher than that of big country A. Therefore, small country B will pay more attention to its relationship with big country A and will be more sensitive to big country A's reaction.

As shown in Figure 1, in the interactive relationship between big country A and small country B, every move of big country A attracts the attention of small country B. We can also see that the angle of attention of small country B is larger than that of big country A. . Because big country A has more than small country B, big country A has a greater impact on small country B than small country B has on big country A, and the relative proportion of benefits and losses that small country B gets from it is also greater than that of big country A. Therefore, small country B will pay more attention to relations with China and will be more sensitive to the reaction of big country A.

Figure 1 Asymmetric attention

Source: Brantly Womack, "Asymmetry and Systemic Misperception: China, Vietnam, Cambodia during the 1970", Vol. 26, No. 2, 2003, p. 95.

But at the same time, big country A is prone to making the mistake of not paying enough attention to small country B (inattention). On the one hand, the handling of important domestic affairs will distract some of the attention of big country A from small country B; on the other hand, when big country A becomes a small country in another set of bilateral relations, it will pay more attention to that set of relations and ignore other Relations with small country B. The above situation will cause big country A to pay intermittent attention to small country B, and its policies towards small country B to be incoherent and inconsistent, thus failing to better manage this relationship. On the one hand, small country B's overattention to big country A will make B respond faster and form more coordinated policies; on the other hand, small country B will make too many guesses about big country A's uncoordinated response. , believing that there is a deeper plan behind behavior A will create a sense of crisis and lead to overreaction. As shown in Figure 2, excessive attention and insufficient attention will produce negative complementarities in theory, but in the practice of international relations they will not cancel each other out, but will continue to develop in opposite directions, leading to misunderstandings and ultimately leading to conflict

Figure 2 Misunderstanding Pattern

Source: Brantly Womack, "Asymmetry and Systemic Misperception: China, Vietnam, Cambodia during the 1970s", Vol. 26, No. 2, 2003, p. 101.

As for the root cause of the misunderstanding between the two parties, we can use the "golden rule" to understand it, that is, look at the other party from their own position. In the eyes of small country B, big country A is a huge country A. It has greater power and will give the same attention as its own country. Therefore, B thinks that A will pose a threat to its own country; while big country A thinks that small country B is a tiny country. B, although small, has his own judgment ability, and the behavior he chooses will pose a challenge to his country's status. We can also see from the side that big country A and small country B have different expectations of each other. A hopes to get B's deference to its power. If B exaggerates its strength in defending its own interests and handling differences with A, or colludes with other countries in order to balance A's influence, then A will feel that B In challenging this asymmetric relationship; on the other hand, B hopes that A will recognize B's autonomy. Since A is stronger, B hopes to get assurance from A that it will not cross boundaries and threaten its own safety. Only when small countries show obedience to big countries and will not challenge the authority of big countries, and when big countries recognize the autonomy of small countries and will not pose a threat to their security, will the interests of both parties be basically satisfied and misunderstandings will not occur.

Although big country A is much more powerful than small country B, wars will not often occur between the two sides. On the contrary, a state of peace will be maintained between the two sides. Since B cannot surpass A in terms of power, even if a war occurs, A's war goals are limited; if a military conflict occurs, it will usually occur on B's territory, and since long-range operations are "expensive", the domestic public is very It is difficult to maintain sustained excitement about the threat of small country B, so in most cases, big countries are in harmony with small countries. Therefore, countries with vastly different strengths will remain in a state of relative peace for a long time. This is a normal state in international relations. Asymmetrical relationships are not a simple set of dominance and submission relationships, nor are they a situation where symmetrical relationships are out of balance, but a permanent feature of certain relationships. It is a normal state between countries. We can also call it normality. The mature "asymmetry". The following section focuses on analyzing the models and characteristics of small country diplomacy from both theoretical and empirical levels.

3. From the perspective of “asymmetric attention”

Theoretical model of small country diplomacy

From the above analysis of the "asymmetric attention" theory, it can be seen that in the process of interaction with large countries, small countries hope to gain recognition of their autonomy from large countries and will pay more attention to the "equality" of the relationship between the two parties. Faced with the threat of power asymmetries between states, small states enhance their relative status by strengthening their collective identity with other states. In this process, small countries are more inclined to adopt multilateral foreign policies to reduce the power asymmetry between countries, exert pressure on big countries, and reduce the diplomatic costs they may face. Although small countries have the inherent disadvantage of being "small", they can still exert an influence on world politics as long as they adopt appropriate strategies.

(1) Balancing diplomacy model

Balanced diplomacy is theoretically derived from the balance of power theory. On the one hand, the balance of power refers to the state of balanced distribution of power; on the other hand, it is the guiding principle and goal of foreign policy. The balance of power is a diplomatic means to achieve a balance of power between countries in order to prevent one country from controlling and endangering the security of other countries. Balanced diplomacy in this article mainly means that in order to maintain the independence and security of its own country, small countries actively develop relations with relevant big countries by cooperating with big countries, and use the conflicts of interests between big countries to shape the influence of big countries on small countries. Balance the situation and form a relatively stable strategic pattern, thereby ensuring the country's security and survival and development environment. Take Central Asia as an example. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, a "power vacuum" appeared in the region, and major powers from outside the region entered Central Asia one after another to compete for power. In order to safeguard national security and national interests, Kazakhstan has pursued a "positive, practical and balanced" foreign policy since its independence: giving priority to developing relations with Russia, the United States, China, the European Union and the four Central Asian countries; , South Asian countries and other development partnerships; actively carry out multilateral cooperation within the framework of international organizations, such as joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the OSCE, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, etc., to improve its international influence. Kyrgyzstan also takes advantage of its unique geopolitical advantages to Russia and the United States have strategic needs in Central Asia to seek benefits for their own national security and development. Central Asian countries use balanced diplomatic strategies to check and balance the influence of major powers in the region. On the one hand, they enhance the independence of national diplomacy, and on the other hand, they also play their role as independent countries, ultimately safeguarding national security and interests.

Under normal circumstances, small countries pursue a balanced diplomatic strategy mainly based on two considerations. The first is the consideration of survival and security. In the process of interaction with big countries, small countries have natural sensitivity and vulnerability. They often regard big countries as major security threats and are unwilling to become vassals of big country diplomacy or sacrifice their own diplomatic autonomy and independence. Therefore, balancing the relations between big countries to achieve mutual restraint has become an important foreign policy for small countries. Secondly, it is based on the consideration of national development. The implementation of balanced diplomacy can increase the investment of big countries in small countries in the process of mutual competition, so small countries can obtain more economic assistance and development opportunities, and reduce the influence and constraints of big countries on the development of small countries. Small countries use the power of big countries to implement balanced diplomacy, maximizing their own interests and minimizing risks.

(2) Group diplomacy (groupdiplomacy) model

The "group" mentioned here does not refer to the concept of enterprise "group" in economics, but refers to groups or groups formed by dividing countries by region or identity. Group diplomacy is most commonly used in the United Nations. It adheres to the principle of "more people, greater strength", wins with numbers, and during the specific implementation process, it will bring a sense of security and concealment to small countries. Usually, the importance of small countries will become apparent after joining a group. Typical representatives include the Small Entente Powers in history (Czechoslovakia, Romania, Yugoslavia), the Guam Group, the Visegrad Group, and the Arab League in reality. , ASEAN, etc.

There is a recognized "group system" in the United Nations, namely the United Nations regional groups, which divide the United Nations member states and observer states mainly on the basis of geographical regions, and allocate positions in the United Nations. The main regional groupings are Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Western European and Others Group. They are spread across key working groups across the United Nations system, working to ensure that developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America have equal voting rights, and these groups often also control the vote in the General Assembly or other larger UN bodies. When it comes to appointing the UN secretary-general, regional groups write to UN member states to express their support for a particular candidate. The Group of 77 is the largest organization of developing countries within the United Nations system. It has made positive contributions to promoting South-South cooperation and promoting the economic development of third world countries. In 1964, at the first United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, due to sharp conflicts in the negotiations on some issues, 77 developing countries united and issued the "Joint Declaration of 77" to jointly resist the developed countries' attempts to influence the international economic order. control. The Group of 77 has strengthened the "collective bargaining" capabilities of developing countries in North-South negotiations within the United Nations system and safeguarded the economic rights and interests of developing countries.

The operation of group diplomacy has both advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, it can unite relevant countries with common interests. In this way, small countries can gain more bargaining chips in negotiations and attract the attention of big countries. If they act alone, small countries will not be able to bargain with big countries. The capabilities will be much weaker, and some national interests will even be lost. But unity is a "double-edged sword." Once a group adopts a common position, it is often difficult to make changes in the future. It is difficult for group diplomacy to give full play to the advantages of individual countries. In a group, consensus as a whole is both the goal and the method. When determining substantive positions, the group pursues the "lowest common denominator"; in other negotiations, the group pursues the "largest common denominator." It can be seen that how to satisfy the interests of member states in negotiations is a major problem in group diplomacy.

(3) Alliance Diplomacy Model

In the "anarchy" state of nature, safeguarding national security and interests is the primary choice of small countries. However, the gap between small countries and big countries in the political, economic, military and other fields can only make small countries the bearers of the international order and can only rely on the help of other countries to achieve their own security . Through alliances, small countries transfer their own security issues to the alliance to obtain security guarantees and enhance the reliability and certainty of national security. Therefore, alliances can maximize the self-interests of small countries and improve the country's security factor.

Generally speaking, small countries choose alliances based on two considerations: first, small countries themselves feel insecure and use alliances to enhance their sense of security; second, they are worried that the target country will be detrimental to them, and alliances with the target country can avoid attacks or attacks by the target country. Isolate yourself. There are two options for small countries to form alliances: one is to form an alliance with a large country or the most threatening entity (following); the other is to form an alliance with small countries to jointly fight against a large country or the most threatening entity (balance). Kenneth N. Waltz believes that checks and balances and following the strong are both means of forming a balance of power.

For small countries, following the strong is the wisest choice, because it is indeed difficult for small countries to balance the power of large countries by themselves. The weaker a country is, the more likely it is that it will choose to form an alliance with a major power. Through alliances, small countries can lead potential security threats to the alliance and eliminate them; they can "free ride" on big countries by teaming up with strong ones, and they can also share some of the fruits of victory of big countries. Even if small countries form relevant alliances, the large gap in strength makes it difficult for the alliance to have full say in some issues. Some regional alliances of small countries still need assistance from regional powers in the fields of economy, military, technology and other fields. For example, before the Asian financial crisis, ASEAN thought that it could establish a free trade area on its own to achieve intra-regional integration. However, the outbreak of the crisis made ASEAN realize the importance of cooperation with regional powers, thus creating the "ASEAN+" mechanism. .

Overall, alliances are crucial to the survival and development of small states. In terms of security, when a small country is threatened, the alliance it participates in usually honors its commitments and helps it defend itself; and the alliance itself also restricts the potential aggressive tendencies of its allies. Trapped by their own capabilities, small countries are unsatisfactory in acquiring technology, resources and intelligence, but alliances can share information through pooling resources, reducing the defense burden on small countries and preventing duplication of work. The economic cooperation between the alliance and development has minimized potential security conflicts. Some scholars have found that within an alliance, when a small country adopts trade protectionism against a big country, the big country is unlikely to retaliate against it. Therefore, alliance diplomacy greatly reduces the space for action by big countries against small countries.

(4) Neutrality diplomacy model

Maintaining neutrality is the diplomatic mode chosen by many small countries during wartime. It involves "non-substantive" interactions with participating countries in an indirect way. Neutrality is an accessory to the balance of power policy, with the purpose of seeking national security in the power struggle between great powers. Generally speaking, neutrality includes three principles: not favoring one's ancestors, not participating in war, and not supporting one's ancestors. Robert Rothstein once explained to "Neutrality": "Small countries hope to use their own smallness to protect themselves. If a small country can remain impartial to one's ancestors when facing problems, attitude, and can make big countries believe that they pose no threat to them, then small countries can remain safe in this storm." But to achieve true neutrality, we also need the respect or consent of big countries, especially neighboring powers. . Take World War II as an example. Nazi Germany ignored the fact that Belgium had signed the Treaty of London and was a neutral country and still invaded it.

For small countries, the implementation of neutrality policies is out of considerations of national security. Laurent Goetschel once wrote: "Neutrality policies were an important part of European security issues in the past. It failed in collective security." "An alternative to military alliance under certain circumstances." Realists (especially neorealists) regard neutrality as the result of the balance of power and a product of the international system. After the end of the Cold War, the international community experienced a period of American hegemony. The importance of neutrality is declining day by day. However, with the recovery of Russia’s national power, the rise of China, and the development of economic power in emerging countries such as India and Brazil, the trend of multipolarization is becoming increasingly obvious. The balanced development of global power means that it may provide small countries with opportunities to regain neutrality. policy space.

In addition, in the specific practice of international relations, neutrality also has a "variant" - "non-alignment", which is an indirect "dilution" of neutrality during the Cold War. During the Cold War, countries such as Yugoslavia, India and Egypt established the "Non-Aligned Movement" in order to withdraw from Cold War politics and not align with the United States or the Soviet Union. It can be said that the "Non-Aligned Movement" is a disguised form of neutrality. Most neutral countries are "non-aligned", such as Switzerland, Turkmenistan, Mongolia, etc. However, "non-alignment" is not neutral in the true sense. In most cases, countries will decide whether to adopt the so-called "non-alignment" policy based on their own political goals, security needs and geographical environment . Therefore, in this sense, it can be said that the "Non-Aligned Movement" has failed. To sum up, no matter whether small countries decide to "hold together for warmth" or "self-reliance" in the "asymmetric attention", it is an explicit or implicit shaping process of national interests, which requires small countries to make judgments based on national conditions and international situations. A small country's decision on which diplomatic model to adopt is guided by its understanding of itself and its place in the international system.

4. From the perspective of “asymmetric attention”

Behavioral Characteristics of Small Country Diplomacy

Usually, writers summarize the diplomatic characteristics of small countries into three points: vulnerability, dependence and marginality. Wei Min further explained: "Smallness is the fundamental reason for the vulnerability of small countries' diplomacy, and vulnerability prompts small countries to adopt more In the end, small countries are in a relatively marginalized position in the international society." However, through the above analysis of the diplomatic models of small countries, we can see that although small countries are small, they can still be on the international stage through the art of vertical and horizontal cooperation. Make an impact. Small countries adjust relevant tactics in a timely manner according to their own needs and maintain a stable "asymmetric" relationship with relevant big countries.

Flexibility is an important feature of small-country diplomacy, which can also be called an advantage. "Adjusting the rudder to the wind" can better safeguard the interests of the country. Therefore, small-country diplomacy in the context of "asymmetric attention" can be said to be more pragmatic. This kind of adaptability is the ability of small countries to "evolve" in response to dangers. Diplomatic flexibility can expand the scope of diplomatic options of small countries to respond to changes in the policies of big countries. This kind of diplomatic "flexibility" enhances the ability of small countries to resist disturbances, and is a gradual learning and adaptation process for small countries.

According to the small country diplomacy model and the "asymmetric attention" theory, small country diplomacy also has the characteristics of morality, institutionality, hierarchy and practicality.

First of all, morality is determined by the "smallness" of small countries and the fragility of diplomacy. In the face of competition among big powers, small countries do not participate in the game of great power status due to their limited strength and influence. Therefore, they have a certain degree of relative detachment, fairness and morality. Today's international society is no longer dominated by the "Hobbesian cultural law" of "the weak and the strong". Instead, it pays more attention to dialogue and cooperation and emphasizes equality among countries. Some small countries build bridges between big countries and promote peace and talks; some small countries pursue neutral policies, advocate peace and oppose war; some small countries often put forward good initiatives and new ideas that are in line with the world's economic and social development trends; and so on. Advanced concepts such as "harmonious world, global village" and "community with a shared future for mankind" are more urgent and important for small countries than for big countries.

However, as security threats become more diverse, changeable and uncontrollable, it is difficult to guarantee that big countries will not invade small countries when national interests are threatened. Even if the international community recognizes the equality of national sovereignty, the natural fragility of small countries can easily make them become victims of the power competition between big countries; on the other hand, the weakness of being "small" will win more sympathy for small countries from the side, and the international community In terms of emotions, it will be more tilted towards small countries, which will win them more attention and support, thus easing the "asymmetric attention" situation between big countries and small countries. Diplomatic behavior is an act subject to moral judgment and will be jointly evaluated by the acting country, the target country and a third country. Therefore, under the constraints of international law and international rules, if a big country invades a small country, it will easily be condemned by the international community, and its international image will be greatly affected. International public opinion plays an increasingly important role in the specific practice of international relations. Big countries choose not to invade small countries based on their sense of morality and responsibility. It can be said that the current balance of international law and international rules is more in favor of small countries. National strength and diplomatic vulnerability determine that small countries cannot exert full influence in international negotiations and foreign negotiations when facing threats. However, international law and international rules The existence of China forces big countries to "act by the rules" in the context of "asymmetric attention" and forces big countries to make otherwise impossible concessions under international pressure. It greatly limits the behavioral boundaries of big countries and minimizes the losses of small countries.

As we know from the above, although a small country is small, it can still have an impact on the international stage through the art of vertical and horizontal cooperation. Small countries adjust relevant tactics in a timely manner according to their own needs and maintain a stable "asymmetric " relationship with relevant big countries. Flexibility is an important feature of the diplomacy of small countries, which can also be called an advantage. "Advertising to the wind" can better safeguard the interests of the country. Therefore, the diplomacy of small countries in the context of "asymmetric attention" can be said to be more flexible. pragmatic. This kind of adaptability is the ability of small countries to "evolve" in response to dangers. Diplomatic flexibility can expand the scope of diplomatic options of small countries to respond to changes in the policies of big countries. This kind of diplomatic "flexibility" enhances the ability of small countries to resist interference, and is a gradual learning and adaptation process for small countries. According to the small country diplomacy model and the "asymmetric attention" theory, small country diplomacy also has the characteristics of morality, institutionality, hierarchy and practicality. First of all, morality is determined by the "smallness" of small countries and the fragility of diplomacy. In the face of competition among big powers, small countries do not participate in the game of great power status due to their limited strength and influence. Therefore, they have a certain degree of relative detachment, fairness and morality. Today's international society is no longer dominated by the "Hobbesian cultural law" of "the weak and the strong". Instead, it pays more attention to dialogue and cooperation and emphasizes the importance of cooperation between countries.

Second, small states rely on institutional mechanisms and content. International institutions are a collection of relevant rules, which exist in the form of routines, organizations, and mechanisms. While stipulating the content of roles, they also restrict the activities of actors and shape relevant expectations. Institutional power is an important power given to small countries by the international system. By leveraging international organizations and international mechanisms, small countries exert indirect influence on big countries and share decision-making power in the international system; small countries use international norms and international organizations to get rid of big countries. They can reverse their "dominated" image and improve the country's autonomy; moreover, small countries can also enhance their voice in the international community by formulating new international rules. The development of globalization has not only promoted the role of international rules, but also increased the demand for their operation. The coverage of international rules has become wider and wider, their content has been continuously improved, and their binding force has also been greatly improved. Once an actor chooses to join an international system, it implicitly accepts the constraints and supervision of that system. Even if unilateralism prevails in some major powers, it has become the consensus of the international community to act in accordance with international rules. The introduction of a third party weakens the structural advantages of major powers. For example, small countries have used the institutional powers granted by the United Nations, such as equal voting rights under the one-country-one-vote system, the right to vote in the General Assembly, the right to hold specific positions, the right to select and set up issues, etc., to improve their position in the international community. The marginal status effectively limits the power of great powers. It can be said that small countries have gained the attention of the international community through the United Nations, received moral support, and improved their international status.

However, it should be noted that some international organizations and non-state actors are often "instrumentalized" and can only serve as a forum for negotiation and play the role of independent actors; and many important international systems are currently dominated by developed countries (big countries). Even if it restricts some of the behaviors of big countries, it still cannot change its essence of safeguarding the interests of big countries. Therefore, fundamentally speaking, the international system is limited in safeguarding the interests of small countries.

In addition, the relationship between large and small countries is hierarchical. The premise of the "asymmetric attention" theory is to recognize the "anarchy" nature of international society. Large countries can rely on their advantages in the fields of politics, economy, military and technology to respond to changes in the international environment and participate in international competition. However, small countries due to " "Small" cannot achieve true self-help in a natural state and can only rely on external forces. In practice, most small countries have become the recipients of the power competition between big powers and are actually under the control and leadership of "semi-paternalistic" big powers to alleviate the threats and vulnerabilities they face. Moreover, in the "asymmetric concern" relationship, large countries also demand respect from small countries and require small countries to recognize their authority. Therefore, in essence, the "asymmetric concern" relationship is an unequal hierarchical relationship. Although this hierarchical relationship will allow big countries to interfere in the domestic affairs of small countries and require small countries to surrender some of their autonomy, according to the analysis of David A. Lake, hierarchical relations will bring the following three benefits to small countries: First, It puts small countries in a relatively stable hierarchical order and maintains the national security and territorial integrity of small countries; secondly, under the control and leadership of big countries, it effectively reduces the transaction costs of war, trade and diplomacy of small countries; thirdly, it enables small countries to It can participate in formulating general rules and standards for international behavior, which can help reduce the occurrence of illegal behaviors that are detrimental to small countries. We can also see from this that the hierarchical relationship between big countries and small countries is also a reflection of the external dependence of small countries. Although the strategic space has shrunk, small countries have gained national security, safeguarded national interests, and preserved their survival by relying on big countries. space. However, the development of international institutions has also provided external support for small countries, which can alleviate the hierarchy between big countries and small countries.

Finally, small-state diplomacy has practical characteristics. For large countries, domestic affairs often determine foreign affairs, while for small countries, diplomacy often determines internal affairs. Small countries account for the majority of countries in the world. They have numerical and moral advantages. They also have the advantage of not attracting attention, not being regarded as a threat, not being deliberately guarded against, and seeming not to be held accountable or exempt from liability. Although small countries are limited in terms of survival and security environment, they also have a certain space to exert their subjective initiative, play both sides, believe in pragmatism, do not choose sides, do not completely "decouple" from any of the competing big countries, and strive to achieve pragmatic solutions. A major country can balance its diplomacy and develop its economy with all its strength. It is easier for small countries to tolerate free riding. Small countries can enjoy certain rights without shouldering too many obligations. Small countries are being wooed by big countries to "make a fortune in silence". The strength of small countries is not based on principles, and the status of small countries is not necessarily based on strength. These are easily understood, tolerated, and even accepted by the international community. It is not uncommon in history and reality for small countries to take advantage of the contradictions, protection and "benevolence" of big countries, as well as "not paying attention", to use small countries to gain power and "eat both ends". Unlike large countries, small countries generally do not like unilateralism, bipolarity or multipolarity, but prefer multilateralism. Because multipolarization is based on large and powerful countries, small countries do not have the strength and opportunity to become the "pole" and "center", but they have the will and moral advantages to cooperate multilaterally. Therefore, small countries are naturally inclined towards peace, not war, and at the same time pursue independent domestic and foreign policies.

5. China’s great power strategy for dealing with small country diplomacy

As the largest number of actors in the international community, small countries have greatly enriched the content of international relations, and their role and influence cannot be underestimated. Moreover, the current "polarization" phenomenon of international power is gradually weakening, and the emergence of global issues has put forward higher requirements for the leadership and governance capabilities of big countries. It requires not only cooperation among big countries, but also the support of small countries. However, strength limits the activities and scope of influence of small countries, and most small countries interact with geographically close countries. Womack also noted that the effects of "asymmetric attention" are more severe for neighboring states because closeness increases the general importance of the relationship between states, thereby increasing the magnitude of the asymmetric effects of even the most peaceful "asymmetries." The same goes for relationships. At the same time, China's diplomatic layout also proposes an arrangement in which "neighborhoods are the priority, developing countries are the foundation, and multilateralism is the important stage." Whether it is China's neighboring countries, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP) ) member countries and countries along the “Belt and Road”, many of which are small and medium-sized countries. Therefore, small neighboring countries and small countries along the “Belt and Road” are important points for China’s future participation in international relations.

However, China's advantages in territorial scale, resource volume, and national strength can easily increase the insecurity of small neighboring countries. Especially with the development of China's economic, military and other "hard power", the "China threat theory" has It affects the potential perception of China by small neighboring countries. In the process of interacting with small countries, in addition to helping small countries develop their economies and strengthen their own "hard power", China can also start from the "soft power" aspect and launch China's "charm offensive" to reduce the fear of neighboring countries, increase mutual trust, and let It realizes that China is an important player in maintaining regional stability and achieving sustainable development, and is also an indispensable force in the balance of major powers. Womack pointed out: "Soft power" is both a God-given right and an obligation of big countries, which requires big countries to provide public goods and persuasive values to the world. "Therefore, based on the characteristics of small country diplomacy, as well as China's national conditions, international status and influence, China can develop relations with small countries in the context of "asymmetric attention" from the following aspects.

First, as a major developing country, it helps small countries improve their “hard power.” "Hard power" is the basis for the development of "soft power" and an important guarantee for national security. Among them, economic development can be said to be the cornerstone of the "hard power" development of small countries and the most direct and effective means to enhance the strength of small countries. However, small countries have limited resources, small domestic markets, and limitations in integrated product production. Small countries need to seek cooperation with foreign countries and are highly dependent on external economies. Their backward economic strength has also increased the burden of diplomatic negotiations on small countries. Therefore, as a major country among developing countries, China has the moral obligation to continue to strengthen assistance and cooperation with small countries in the economic field, to help small countries develop their economies and improve their national construction capabilities, starting with the construction of the Belt and Road Initiative: (1) Improving the matching of aid Further clarify the functional positioning of foreign economic aid, realize the mutual coordination of foreign economic aid and the construction of the "Belt and Road" initiative, realize the docking of the "Belt and Road" initiative and the development policies of countries along the route, and find the direction of cooperation and development. (2) Improve aid Accuracy. According to the different needs and fields of different regions and countries, different construction projects and aid policies will be promoted under the "Belt and Road" framework, reflecting the scientific nature, planning and efficiency of foreign aid actions, and strengthening China's "Belt and Road Initiative" Focus on investment in advantageous areas of the Belt and Road Initiative to improve the quality and effectiveness of aid. (3) Improve the coordination of aid work. Strengthen the skills and quality training of foreign aid personnel, and provide relevant foreign aid Chinese companies with assistance in capital, taxation, and overseas risks. Provide convenience in terms of prevention, strengthen the institutional construction and improvement of the "One Belt and One Road" in terms of policies, strategies, management regulations, and foreign aid project evaluation, and achieve the optimization of systems and mechanisms during the construction of the "Belt and Road". With countries along the "Belt and Road" "Consult, build and share" with neighboring countries, and establish a new type of relations between large and small countries based on equality and mutual respect and good-neighborly relations with neighboring countries. At present, fighting the COVID-19 epidemic and restarting the economy have become the top priorities for all countries. In terms of vaccine research and development, production, On issues of distribution cooperation and making vaccines a global public good that is accessible and affordable to people of all countries, especially small countries, China will continue to provide assistance to the best of its ability to countries and regions with weak response capabilities, especially small countries, and promote the development of vaccines. Accessibility and affordability in China will help the world defeat the epidemic as soon as possible.

Second, uphold the philosophy and spirit of humanitarianism and a community with a shared future for mankind, and demonstrate China's development path, philosophy and diplomatic thinking to countries around the world, including small countries, with a broad, inclusive and open mind. Since China became the world's second largest economy in 2010, China has worked hard to enhance its "soft power" and has successively proposed diplomacy with Chinese characteristics such as the "Chinese Dream", "New Major Power Relations", "One Belt and One Road Initiative" and "A Community with a Shared Future for Mankind". Concept. In order for countries around the world, especially small countries, to better understand China's system, culture and path, and to lift their wariness and even hostility towards China, they need to tell China's story well, spread their own voices, and present a true, three-dimensional and comprehensive China. As of now In 2017, "Xi Jinping: The Governance of China" was translated into 21 languages, opening a window for the world to understand China's national conditions, diplomatic philosophy, and leaders' governance. In terms of personnel exchanges, China has also provided outstanding talents to some small countries. Various forms of scholarships are provided for international students, and China's excellent culture is spread to the outside world through Confucius Institutes. With a progressive, open and inclusive attitude, it downplays the psychological impact of the "China threat theory" on small countries. In terms of diplomatic concepts, "a community with a shared future for mankind" It is the core of the thinking on major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, and it is also an important plan given by China in response to major changes and adjustments in the world structure. The development of globalization has enabled human society to develop into a community of interests in which you have me, and I have you. , a community of responsibility and a community of destiny. Especially the current situation of the continuous spread of the new coronavirus epidemic in the world has further highlighted the importance and urgency of the concept and spirit of a community of shared future for mankind.

third, Actively participate in the construction of international institutions and enhance the institutional voice of small countries. International institutions are an important source of a country's "soft power." On the one hand, institutional construction fulfills the country's responsibility to provide public goods, and on the other hand, it also enhances the country's international voice. As a developing country and a former "small country", China has the obligation, responsibility and necessity to speak out for small countries and win their support in the process of participating in the construction of international institutions. On the one hand, most of the current international systems were established by developed countries. If China wants to enhance its international voice, it must obtain the support of small countries and avoid being isolated in the game with the vested interests of the current international system, that is, developed countries. is very important; on the other hand, China can only represent the interests of small countries, speak for small countries, respect the core concerns of small countries, enhance the institutional voice of small countries, understand each other, complement each other, equality and mutual benefit, uphold justice, uphold justice, and adhere to principles. Only by having the courage to take responsibility and oppose Western unilateralism and bullying can we win the recognition and support of most countries, including small countries. In recent years, China has used the Forum on China-Africa, the SCO Summit, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, and the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation to showcase China to countries around the world, including small countries, spread its voice, and use the soft power of "home diplomacy" to Advantages, improve China's international image, improve small countries' negative perceptions of China, and increase China's affinity and appeal to small countries. This will help reach consensus, connect people and shape common actions. At a time when the COVID-19 epidemic is raging, China adheres to multilateralism, supports the World Health Organization, advocates fairness and equity in vaccine distribution, and promises to provide global public goods after China's vaccine research is successful." These propositions of China are most in line with the interests of small and medium-sized countries and have received received firm support from small and medium-sized countries. When the “Belt and Road” initiative was proposed and the AIIB was established, many countries suspected that this was an important measure by China to “challenge the West.” As practice progressed, many countries, especially small countries, benefited from it. Only then did they gradually dispel their doubts and actively participate in the construction of the “One Belt, One Road” initiative.

fourth, According to the characteristics of pragmatic diplomacy of small countries, In its diplomacy with small countries, China should adhere to the principle of balancing justice and interests and pursuing mutual benefit and win-win results. On the one hand, the diplomacy of small countries has the characteristics of morality and impartiality, and on the other hand, it also has the characteristics of pragmatism. Some small countries tend to follow the trend in international relations, adapt to the trend, put pragmatism first, eat both ends, have no principles, are profit-seeking, and are ever-changing. , and even use and play with big countries to benefit themselves at the expense of others. Therefore, in the process of dealing with small countries, we must be clear-headed and not be confused. We must be responsible and have justice first. We must also have principles, rules, and bottom lines. We must not be too idealistic, and we must not be wishful thinking without any principles or reservations. To be "selfless" and "good humane" without any conditions. We must adhere to the principle of balancing justice and interests, sharing responsibilities, sharing interests, mutual benefit and common development, so as to promote the construction of a community with a shared future for countries large and small.

The coexistence of large and small countries and the fact that small countries account for the majority of members of the international community are objective facts and phenomena that have existed in the international society since the emergence of the modern international system. In situations where the scale of power and psychological cognition are different, "asymmetric attention" will arise between large and small countries. Under the perspective of "asymmetric attention", small countries rely on various diplomatic models such as balanced diplomacy, group diplomacy, alliance diplomacy, neutral diplomacy, etc. to ease the "asymmetric" situation between them and big countries and improve their autonomy, which reflects the small countries' Diplomatic behavior has the characteristics of flexibility, morality, institutionality, hierarchy and practicality. Compared with the diplomacy of big countries, the theoretical construction of diplomacy of small countries is necessary, but has been ignored for a long time. This article is just an effort, and I hope it can serve as a starting point.

Small countries under the perspective of "asymmetric attention" need more attention from the international community, understanding the mentality of small countries, standing in the position of small countries, considering the diplomatic behavior of small countries, and caring for and protecting their legitimate concerns. Small countries are not meant to be exploited, and their demands and interests cannot be ignored. In this regard, the behavior of major powers plays an important role. As a developing big country, China is also a responsible big country. It must abandon the inertial thinking and traditional thinking of "small countries have no diplomacy" and "weak countries have no diplomacy" and uphold the concept of "all countries are equal regardless of their size" and a community with a shared future for mankind. Concept, on the basis of adhering to "big countries are the key", attaching importance to small countries, attaching importance to the diplomacy of small countries, and striving to build a new type of international relations and an overall diplomatic system with Chinese characteristics.

The current international situation is undergoing complex and profound changes and is in a period of turbulent change. The world is facing major changes unseen in a century. Challenges of a global nature are emerging one after another. The international order is chaotic and disorderly. There is a strong call for international cooperation and global governance. If a rising China wants to achieve regional and global strategic goals, it needs to regard the large number of small neighboring countries and small countries along the "Belt and Road" as important strategic pivots and form a healthy symbiotic and interactive relationship. “China’s great power diplomacy does not simply refer to diplomacy between great powers, but refers to the transition from keeping a low profile to working hard to make a difference. It requires a great power to act, a great power to take responsibility, a great power to have a great mind, a great spirit, and a great contribution to provide global public goods and benefit the world. People of all countries." China's diplomacy towards small countries is neither charity nor control. In November 2020, RCEP was signed, and the world's largest free trade area, including the ten small ASEAN countries, officially launched. At the beginning of 2021, the foreign ministers of several ASEAN countries, including Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, paid intensive visits to China. This was a major achievement in China's diplomacy with small countries. On the basis of the correct view of justice and interests, developing and practicing the diplomatic concept of "amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness", mutual benefit and win-win, and common development towards small countries is an important part of major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics and a new type of international relations, and will Make significant contributions to promoting the development of international political civilization and the construction of a community with a shared future for countries large and small.