

# China's International Role in the Transformation of the International Order: Beyond Revisionism

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**Abstract:** While china's rapid development has achieved its own goals, it has also made western countries led by the United States worry about whether china will become a "revisionist" of the existing international order. The essence of this question is what kind of international role china is playing in the current transformation of the international order, and whether china's international role practice meets the internal requirements of this role type. This paper reflects on the mainstream theory, summarizes the research status of the international order at home and abroad, and proposes that the current international order transformation is the evolution of "institutional order" and the return of "value order" through the performance of the current international order transformation in real politics. Secondly, according to the domestic and international roots of the formation of the international role, the paper analyzes china's international role in the transformation of the current international order. Thirdly, it discusses whether china's role practice meets the internal requirements of its international role. Finally, by analyzing the current situation of role conflicts faced by china, the author puts forward countermeasures.

## 1. Introduction

In the field of international politics, international order has always been a controversial concept. Joseph Nye [1] pointed out that various international political theories have unique assumptions about the definition of international order. Realistic school's understanding of international order is based on power, balance of power and international system. Based on this, realist school's research on international order mainly focuses on balance of power and hegemonic order. The representatives of realism, Henry Kissinger, Hans Morgenthau and Kenny Waltz, all made wonderful statements on the order of balance of power. Henry Kissinger [2] believes that the international order refers to the distribution of power based on a recognized concept in a larger world, and the realization of the international order depends on the observance of the rules and the restraint after the rules are broken in the process of national exchanges. It can be seen that Kissinger believes that the balance of power can achieve an order, and the maintenance of this balance of power needs to rely on recognized rules. In addition, there are many studies on the hegemonic order. Hegemony means that a country gains monopoly power over international affairs by relying on its comprehensive national strength, and then controls the international system. Charles Goldberg [3] believes that the better development of the world economy calls for the emergence of world hegemony. The so-called hegemonic order refers to the order in which the hegemonic countries have a monopoly on the allocation of resources, the formulation of international rules and the provision of public goods [4]. Robert Gilpin believes that the hegemonic system can play a stabilizing role in the international order, and the extraordinary comprehensive strength of the hegemonic country is the guarantee of this stability [5]. The "theory of hegemonic order" fundamentally believes that hegemony can achieve long-term peace and prosperity of the international community, and "peace under the rule of Britain and the United States" has become their most convincing evidence.

Scholars of the realist school define the international order from the perspective of "power", while the liberal school takes the system as the starting point of the study of the international order. It is generally accepted by scholars that institutions in the field of international relations refer to explicit

or implicit principles formed according to the expectations generated by the interaction between actors. Such principles may exist in the form of rules, mechanisms or organizations [6]. The British School is an important part of the neo-liberal institutionalism. The Anarchy Society: A Study of Order in World Politics, written by Hedley Bull, is a masterpiece of the study of international order. Bull [7] believes that the international order is the pattern of behavior that pursues the basic or main goals of the national society or the international community. The widely recognized concept of interests, rules and systems are the main elements of the international order. Butterfield [8] believes that the basic function of the international order should be that the acts of violence of actors in the international system should be restricted by the system, so that all actors in the system can achieve independent and independent disposal of domestic and international affairs. Scholars of the British School have studied the international order based on the system. They believe that the system can limit the evil of "anarchy", and then realize the function and goal of order.

## **2. Role Cognition: International Order and its Transformation**

How to determine the international role in the transformation of the international order is a problem that every major country will inevitably face, and the recognition of the international role, that is, the understanding of the international order and the judgment of the current transformation, determines the type of role that the major country chooses. In the face of the current transformation of the international order, whether to choose the logic of power politics to deal with it, or to choose the logic of "institutional checks and balances" to deal with it, or whether there are other ways to understand it, determines the role of the great powers [9]. Therefore, it is particularly necessary to make an in-depth analysis of the international order and its current transformation and to see through its essence.

At present, the most competitive fields in the international system are the economic and trade field and the financial field, and the competition in these two fields is carried out simultaneously at the global and regional levels [10]. The competition between developed countries and developing countries is the most concentrated in the three international organizations: the World Trade Organization, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. First of all, from the perspective of the institutional competition of the World Trade Organization, the current institutional competition of the organization is mainly manifested as intra-institutional competition, and the core issue is the competition of trade rules. With the rise of emerging market countries, the existing trade rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO) cannot well reflect the interests of these countries. Many countries or regional organizations are promoting the reform of the WTO in order to achieve more of their own interests and thus have greater influence in the global trading system. However, the United States has an ambiguous attitude towards the reform of the WTO. The United States proposes to expand the scope of the functions of the WTO Secretariat and other measures. The essential purpose is to consolidate its leading power over the WTO. Secondly, the intra-system competition between the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund mainly focuses on shares and voting rights. With the group rise of emerging countries represented by China, the growing economic scale requires the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to open more shares and voting rights, but such behavior requires reducing the weight of the western countries led by the United States, so the competition between the two sides on this issue has fallen into a dilemma.

## **3. Role Practice: China's International Role in the Transformation of the Current International Order**

The role cognition and role type of a big country determine its role practice. The practice of the role of a country usually means that a country should practice its own role according to the expectations of other countries and the cognitive norms of the international community. Generally, the international role practice of a country is the performance of the role cognition and the responsibility and behavior contained in the role. China's international role in responding to the transformation of the current international order is that of a builder. This conclusion is derived from theory. Therefore, it is necessary to examine China's practice in the transformation of the international

order to test the reliability of this conclusion.

In the context of the transformation of the international order, the words "cooperation, consultation, win-win" in China's important external statements appear very frequently and are also in the core position. It can be seen that this to a certain extent reflects China's attitude towards the transformation of the international order and the handling of relations between countries [11]. The semantic background of "win-win" involves the idea of how to deal with the conflicts of interests between countries and how to realize the development and prosperity of countries. Through the high-frequency word "win-win", we can see that China is not a big country that guides its own behavior with the principle of pure "instrumental rationality". "Cooperation" and "consultation" emphasize the general principles of dealing with state-to-state relations, while the opposite words are "coercion" and "conflict". It can be seen that China advocates solving problems in a mild way to enhance consensus, rather than achieving its own goals by coercive means. Although the three words "international order", "global governance" and "international system" appear frequently, they do not mean that China is trying to be a destroyer of the current international order. China is the largest developing country in the world and the second largest economy in the world. From the perspective of national size, China is undoubtedly a big country. For the normal operation of the international order, China's role is indispensable. As an active participant in global governance, China has made its own contribution to alleviating the "governance deficit", "peace deficit", "trust deficit" and "development deficit". A stable international order and effective global governance are inseparable from the support of the international system. Therefore, China's attention to these three areas is the theme of the responsibility of major powers. Moreover, these three words are not at the core of China's external publicity, and it can also be seen that China has no intention of challenging and revising the current international order.

From the above analysis, what China is trying to show is the image of a responsible big country. Its external publicity focuses on how to deal with the relations between countries in a peaceful way. For the problems existing in the current international order, it is to actively face the search for solutions rather than change course to establish a new international system and seek to become the leading country of the new international order. Thus, China's state behavior and actions in its external propaganda are in line with the equilibrium of the state's "rational state", which further proves that China is the builder of the current international order.

#### **4. Role Conflict and Coordination: China's International Role Challenges and Responses**

Role conflict is one of the important components of role theory and another research link after role cognition and role playing. The so-called role conflict refers to the situation that the individual's role play violates the role cognition due to the contradiction of role expectation [12]. Role conflict includes three types: intra-role conflict, inter-role conflict and out-of-role conflict. In response to the current transformation of the international order, China's role cognition and role practice are in line with the endogenous logic and interaction requirements of the role type of the constructor in the transformation of the international order, but the western countries still believe that China plays the role types of "revisionist", "challenger", "subversive" in the current international order, which means that China's current international role conflicts. Whether this conflict is intra-role conflict, inter-role conflict or out-of-role conflict requires further rigorous analysis, and after exploring the root causes of role conflict, it is also necessary to propose a feasible plan for China to deal with role conflict.

The role conflict of China's international role focuses on the intrarole conflict. The factors that affect the intrarole conflict are the consistency of the other's expectation and the strictness of the limit of the other's expectation. Role coordination is an effective way to resolve role conflicts. Therefore, coordinating the intrarole conflicts in China's current international role should also be carried out from three aspects, namely, coordinating the international role expectations, strengthening the self-control of the international role and stabilizing the role position, according to the two factors that affect the expectations of others.

Firstly, coordinate the expectations of international roles. The other expectation of coordinating the international role is mainly to coordinate the expectations of the western countries led by the United States for China's international role. The national culture formed by the two countries in their

respective historical development is the basis of their own cognition, and also the standard to judge whether the behavior of other countries is friendly or not. Carrying out dialogue between the two countries as much as possible can alleviate the intra-role conflicts brought about by the expectation of others.

Secondly, strengthen international role self-control. The degree of self-control of role change is an important reason that affects the conflict within the role. Having good self-control and adjustment ability is the internal requirement for better role practice. Proper self-control is also the driving force for the continuous development of role practice. Strengthening the self-control of international roles does not mean that the current international role conflicts should be deadlocked, but in the face of such conflicts, we should strengthen role cognition, fully implement role practice in accordance with the internal requirements of roles, and strengthen our own development path in the face of role conflicts. We should not only grasp the opportunity to resolve the conflicts within roles, but also avoid becoming opportunists and losing international credibility. In the face of the conflict between self-cognition and other expectations and the strict limitation of other expectations, China's strengthening of role self-control helps to standardize its own role practice and ease the conflict within the role with practice.

Thirdly, stabilize the role position. The change of role position will affect the degree of role conflict. Generally speaking, the more frequent the role position changes, the more intense the role conflict is, the more stable the role position is, and the smaller the role conflict is. The significance of stabilizing the role position in easing the intra-role conflict caused by the expectation of others lies in reducing the suspicion and the "security dilemma" that may be caused by pure "instrumentalism".

## 5. Conclusion

Through theoretical analysis of the international order and its current transformation, this paper draws the definition of the international order and the essence of its current transformation, and accordingly forms the analytical framework of the international role of the major powers, summarizes the types of the international role of the major powers, and on this basis explores China's international role in the current transformation of the international order, and analyzes the role practice of China's international role. Then it discusses the current situation of the role conflict of China's international role and puts forward corresponding countermeasures. To sum up, China is playing an international role as a builder in the transformation of the current international order. The current type of role conflict faced by China's international role is intrarole conflict, that is, the conflict between the status quo of the role and the expectation of others. China should solve the current conflict within its role from three aspects: coordinating international role expectations, strengthening role self-control and stabilizing role position.

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