



Strategic Choices and Order Transformation of Major Power States in East Asia-The Transformation of East Asian Tribute Order in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties as an Example

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Abstract. The views of established studies on anarchic order in East Asia are analyzed based on the theories of international power structure, international institutional change, and international normative studies of the three major theoretical schools. the pattern of power distribution in East Asia is changing with the rise of China after the financial crisis in 2008. To improve the theoretical logic of the transformation of regional anarchic order and analyze the possibility of the prospect of the transformation of regional order in East Asia, this paper takes the regional power distribution as the independent variable, the strategic choice of major power states as the mediating variable, and the nature of regional order as the dependent variable for logical construction. And the transformation of East Asian tribute order in the Yuan and Ming dynasties is selected as a case study to explain the above theoretical logic.

Keywords: East Asia; strategic choice; order change; tribute order

1 Introduction

In recent years, with the economic development and comprehensive national power of countries in East Asia, the regional power distribution pattern has shown a trend of change. This changing trend has triggered the attention and analysis of scholars from different theoretical positions in international political science on the direction and prospects of the regional order in East Asia [1]. The reason for this is that different scholars in the field of international relations have produced their own understanding of international order based on the theoretical assumptions of their respective schools of thought, such as the power-led order, system-led order and norm-led order views of order distinguished according to the core concepts of the three major theoretical schools [3], which evolved two different models for understanding the transformation of international order [2], the first one is the simplification model, that is, the view that the

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change of international order The first is the simplification model, which holds that the change of the international order is complete and there is no succession of the old order in the new order. The second is the complex model, which holds that the transformation of the international order is a gradual process, and that there is both partial succession to the old order in the transformation process, and at the same time holds that the process of change in different areas of the international order is different.

This paper agrees with the complex model of order change, that is, there is a possibility of gradual transformation of the order in East Asia with the change of power distribution. It is also argued that the view of order and the model of order transformation based on the core assumptions of different theoretical schools have the following two theoretical logical flaws: first, the conceptual distinction between international structure and international order is not clear, and most of the existing studies assume that the nature of international structure necessarily determines the nature of international order. Secondly, taking power, institutions and norms as independent variables to explain the type of order will inevitably lead to more subjective and fatalistic factors in judging the prospect of regional order transformation, making it difficult to explore the logic of the process behind the reality of order transformation, especially the influence of strategic choice factors at the level of national units on the process and outcome of order evolution in a more comprehensive and clear way.

To further improve the theoretical study of order transformation in East Asia, the research questions proposed and focused on in this paper are: what are the foundations and dynamics of the establishment and transformation of a regional international anarchic order, and does the establishment of a new order have to be premised on a major power war that changes the structure of the system? How will the strategic choices and strategic interactions of the major power states in the transformation of the old and new orders affect the process and outcome of the order transformation? To explain the above questions, this paper establishes an explanatory mechanism about the regional order transformation with the help of strategic analysis and game theory framework, so as to analyze the prospect of the East Asian order transformation with this explanatory mechanism.

2 Literature

Many scholars have obtained relatively sound results in the established studies of regional orders. For example, Liu Feng uses the international power contrast as the basic criterion to classify the order, and distinguishes the traditional East Asian order into monocentric order, polycentric order and dualistic pattern theory based on the power structure on which different orders depend [4]; Sun Xuefeng and Huang Yuxing define the regional order based on the views of scholars such as Hedley Bull and Muthiah Alagappa A more operational definition of regional order is "a pattern of international behavior within a given geographic area that promotes the achievement of the basic goals of the region, including the maintenance of the existence and sovereignty of states within the region, the reduction and prevention of violent conflicts within the region, and the functioning of regional rules and institutional arrangements." [5] and classified the regional order into four types based on the comparative power of the major states

within the region and the degree of acceptance of regional rules: hegemonic order, tribute order, homogeneous order, and communitarian order.

3 Theoretical Logic of Transformation of Regional Anarchy - Strategic Choices and Games of States

The definition of "order" is an important concept in political science, but in the field of international politics, there is no central authority that can perform the above-mentioned functions as well as the domestic political system, i.e., anarchy. One of the reasons for the different definitions of the concepts of international and regional order is the difference in the perception of anarchy. In addition, different views have been put forward on the elements that constitute international or regional order in anarchy, such as the role of geography, power distribution, institutions, normative identity, etc. in the construction of order. Based on the existing studies, this paper will provide a more comprehensive definition and classification criteria of regional anarchic order and use it as a basis to analyze the shortcomings of the existing theories of regional order transformation. To address the shortcomings of the existing theories, this paper combines game theory and strategic choice theory to establish a new theoretical framework to explain the transformation of regional order, aiming to focus on the analysis of the strategies of the major regional power states will influence and act on the transformation of regional order.

3.1 Analysis of independent variables - the basis and dynamics of regional order transformation

Robert Gilpin, a leading researcher in the theory of international political change, in "War and Change in World Politics," provides a detailed discussion of the foundations and dynamics of change in the international system. He argues that the impetus for change in the international system or order stems from the phenomenon of systemic imbalance caused by the law of unbalanced development [6]. It follows that whether the system crisis can be resolved is the key to the successful transformation of the international order.

Gilpin argues that although such crises can be resolved by peaceful adjustment of systemic imbalances, the main mechanism for change has been war throughout the course of history. However, the author argues that, throughout history, while changes in international politics have often been accompanied by wars over hegemony, there has been no shortage of historical cases of peaceful change. Therefore, whether the internal structural crisis will be transformed into war also depends on the cost-benefit assessment between the major power states and the corresponding strategic choice, for the system of change into the cost of war can be accepted by the countries is an important factor to measure the possibility of the outbreak of systemic war.

In summary, this paper argues that the independent variables leading to transformational change in the region are essentially attributable to changes in the international power structure at the system level, which can be divided into unipolar, bipolar, and

multipolar structures according to the number of major power states in the system. The growth of economic power is still a sign of the increase of the country's overall power, and the growth of a country's economic power will be translated into the overall power of the country in a certain period of time. Therefore, this paper regards the influence produced by the independent variables as a dynamic process, when there is some objective trend of power structure change within the regional system, it will inevitably lead to the emergence of the dynamics of order change.

3.2 Analysis of causal mechanism - the mechanism of regional order change

3.2.1 Theoretical assumptions:

Before carrying out the analysis of causal mechanism, this paper first needs to determine the basic assumptions of what kind of change order is followed among countries when the power structure changes, so that a more explanatory theoretical framework can be established. The view of this paper is that, when the power structure changes, states follow the assumption of limited rational man, that is, they participate in the game process of international order change according to the satisfaction principle, and in the change of international order, there are multiple game actors (such as the hegemonic state and other states in the system in the unipolar structure, between two powerful states in the bipolar structure, and the major power states in the multipolar structure), and the different actors will make interdependent decisions and eventually make strategic choices based on cost-benefit analysis. The specific explanations are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: The limited rationalist hypothesis of regional order change. The goal of national foreign policy is to change the international order in a way that increases national interests, but since the national decision-making group does not have sufficient information in a certain period of time and cannot predict the complex systemic effects in the game process, the major power states involved in the order change game tend to make strategic choices based on the satisfaction of the game utility results. Therefore, the major powers involved in the game of order change tend to make strategic choices according to the satisfaction of the game utility results.

Hypothesis 2: Multiple game actors are involved in the regional order. That is, there are different game actors in the process of change of different power structures. For example, in the unipolar structure, the main actors involved in the game can be divided into the hegemonic state and other states in the system, and since the hegemonic state occupies more than half of the power resources in the system, the type of regional order change is usually determined by the hegemonic state. In contrast, in bipolar and multipolar structures, the outcome of regional order change is often a consequence of the game generated by two or more power states competing or cooperating.

Hypothesis 3: Decision choices in order change games follow interdependent decisions [7]. That is, actors with different preferences make behavioral choices under different interdependent circumstances and conditions. For example, in a unipolar structure, hegemonic states and other states in the system have different preferences and benefits in terms of system establishment, and hegemonic states prefer to establish an

international or regional order that meets their own hegemonic interests and face the cost of providing public goods and the risk of being "free-rider", while other states in the system have two kinds of fears about the change of the regional order. The other countries in the system have two fears of change in the regional order - being dominated or being left behind. But despite the different preferences and benefits, the decisions of the hegemonic powers and other countries are interdependent and influence each other.

3.2.2 Causal mechanisms.

In this paper, the causal mechanism of regional order transformation is assumed as follows: when the power structure changes in a certain period of time (such as the unipolar structure after the Great War, the bipolar structure that tends to form due to the law of uneven development, and the change in the power contrast of major power states in the multipolar structure), game actors with different preferences for benefits or loss avoidance regarding the prospect of order change will arise, and those who have major power in this period. Those actors with major power in this period will make external decisions and strategic choices based on limited rationality analysis, and the results of their games will determine the nature of the changed regional order.

In the process of regional order change, different trends of power structure change will occur within a certain period, so different game states will be generated in different situations, and the results of order change will be different.

In the process of changing the regional power structure to a unipolar system, there are two game actors, namely, potential (or formed) unipolar states and other small regional states. In this case, the two types of states face the following game model: according to the assumption of limited rationality in the cost-benefit analysis of the state, the unipolar state will try to establish a regional system that meets its maximum interests, but also faces the costs of providing public goods and the risk of being "free-rider", in this case, the unipolar state has three main strategic options. In this case, unipolar states have three main strategic options, namely, not to assume responsibility for establishing or maintaining a regional order, to establish a mandatory hegemonic order, and to establish a dominant regional order under strategic constraints. The small regional states, due to the failure of checks and balances, have been unable to reverse the trend of unipolar state formation and are facing the fear of being dominated and abandoned at the same time, and can only choose two strategies of obedience and resistance.

4 Case Research

This section examines the above causal mechanisms by examining the case of the transformation of the East Asian tribute order during the Yuan and Ming dynasties.

Based on the Yuan dynasty, which ended the bipolar or multipolar pattern in East Asia that had lasted for more than two hundred years (960-1279) and established a regime with the nature of a world empire, an unprecedented unipolar power structure was formed in East Asia, and the Mongol rulers set out to promote the transformation of the regional order.

In East Asia at that time, the tribute order was still dominant, but the power struggle between Liao, Song, Jin and Yuan prevented the formation of a somewhat more stable tribute order. After the unification of China, the Mongol rulers took the rightful place in Chinese history and actively developed overseas trade and Sino-foreign contacts. Yuan Shi Zu instructed the local officials of the southeastern coastal provinces: "The foreign countries listed in the southeastern islands, all have the desire to admire righteousness, can be announced in the vassals of the people, sincere can admire righteousness to come to the dynasty, I will favor the courtesy of the, its exchange of mutual markets, each from the desire" [8]. The Yuan regime under the unipolar structure did not choose to avoid the responsibility of providing regional public goods, but actively participated in the transformation of the tribute order. However, because the Yuan dynasty possessed strong military power, the rulers believed that they could force small regional states to submit to the regional order they had established through forceful conquest, and therefore adopted a strategy of forceful conquest and high-handed policies, sending troops to Goryeo, Japan, Annam, Chamdo, Burma, and Java, and interfering in the internal affairs of vassal states [7].

As can be seen, the Yuan dynasty essentially established a hegemonic order with tribute as a veneer. The tribute system at this time had more practical connotations of sovereign-subordinate relations (stronger hierarchy) than before, and the ceremonial nature of tribute was relegated to a secondary position, which made the order in East Asia during the Yuan dynasty less cooperative and stable, and at the same time the smaller regional states identified less with the legitimacy of the order. Under this order model, the Yuan dynasty seemed to have gained territorial expansion and subservience of small regional states through power politics and expansionary policies, but it was also this lack of strategic restraint that led to the over-expansion of the Yuan dynasty, and the imbalance within the regional order could not be effectively resolved, which eventually led to the collapse of the Yuan hegemonic order.

In 1368, the hegemonic Yuan dynasty came to an end and was replaced by the Ming dynasty established by Zhu Yuanzhang. While the rulers of the Ming dynasty developed the feudal autocracy to its peak, they also brought the regional order represented by the tribute system to its extreme. The development of Sino-foreign tribute relations and the improvement of the tribute system in the Ming dynasty were the direct products of the foreign policy and strategic choices of the early Ming dynasty.

At the beginning of the Ming Dynasty, East Asia was in a window of order due to the wars during the collapse of the Yuan Dynasty. The primary diplomatic problem faced by the Ming emperor Zhu Yuanzhang was to eliminate the influence of Mongolian rule overseas by strengthening and consolidating the regional tribute order, and to establish the new dynasty's orthodox status in China and its own image as the "Four Tables of Light" [8].

In addition, the system of enfeoffment in the Ming dynasty maintained the legitimacy of the regional order at the political level, making it more cooperative and stable. When Ming Emperor Taizu first enfeoffed Joseon, Annam, and Chamdo, he bestowed gold seals on the kings of Joseon and gold-plated silver seals on the kings of Annam and Chamdo, and thereafter on the kings of Ryukyu. In the eyes of some kings, the seal granted by the Ming dynasty was a symbol of power and thus held in high regard.

A comparative study of the tribute order during the Yuan and Ming dynasties reveals that under the unipolar power structure, the strategic choice of the unipolar state for the establishment of the regional order was crucial. The key to the establishment of a regional order that is recognized by small regional states while assuming regional responsibilities lies in the ability of unipolar states to exercise effective strategic restraint. The Ming dynasty, which brought the regional tribute order to its peak and continued for a long time in history, was a successful attempt to establish a unipolar state in the regional order.

5 Conclusion

The foundation and impetus for the establishment and transformation of regional anarchic order lies in the phenomenon of regional imbalance arising from the change of regional power structure, i.e., the distribution of benefits of the order does not conform to the objective distribution of power; the fear of potential threat of loss and the expectation of potential expected gain are the driving forces for the transformation of regional order by different countries; the main mechanism of change for the establishment of the new order is hegemonic war, but there is also the possibility of gradual change.

The world is currently undergoing unprecedented changes in a century, and the regional order in East Asia has also seen a trend of change with the relative decline of U.S. hegemony and the economic rise of China. In the causal mechanism inferred in this paper, the strategic competition between rising powers and hegemonic powers is a key factor in determining the direction of the regional order, and in terms of long-term interests, the implementation of effective strategic restraint and restraint is a rational choice to avoid structural contradictions leading to hegemonic wars, regardless of whether it is a rising power or a hegemonic power.

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