

Shanghai Academy of Social Science

SASS PAPERS 12

Volume III

International Studies , Politics and Law



Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press

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Volume III

International Studies , Politics and Law

SASS PAPERS **Editorial board**



Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

上海社会科学院论文选.第12辑.第3卷,国际研究、
政治和法律:英文/《上海社会科学院论文选》编委
会编.—上海:上海社会科学院出版社,2015

ISBN 978-7-5520-1041-1

I. ①上… II. ①上… III. ①社会科学—文集—英文
IV. ①C53

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字(2015)第256472号

SASS PAPERS 12. Volume III International Studies, Politics and Law
上海社会科学院论文选.第12辑.第3卷:国际研究、政治和法律

编者:《上海社会科学院论文选》编委会(SASS PAPERS Editorial Board)

责任编辑:应韶荃

封面设计:李廉 刘雪晴

出版发行:上海社会科学院出版社

上海淮海中路622弄7号 电话63875741 邮编200020

<http://www.sassp.org.cn> E-mail: sassp@sass.org.cn

照排:南京理工出版信息技术有限公司

印刷:上海颀辉印刷厂

开本:720×1010毫米 1/16开

印张:17.5

插页:1

字数:327千字

版次:2016年1月第1版

2016年1月第1次印刷

ISBN 978-7-5520-1041-1/C·106

定价:198.00元(全四卷)

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Interest and Value Reconstruction in the Contemporary International Relations

HUANG Renwei

Abstract: Interest and value reconstruction is the theoretical innovation question in the international relations, the strategic issue the current Chinese is facing as well as one of essential problems of transformation of the current international system. The concepts of “China dream”, “new relationship between great powers”, “interests community” and even “harmonious world”, etc. also need to solve reconstruction problem of interest and value. This paper attempts to carry out the preliminary discussion on this major theoretical and realistic problem.

Keywords: Contemporary International Relations, Interests, Value, Reconstruction

Many international and domestic problems that China is currently facing are involved with reconstruction of interest and value, for example, the concepts of “China dream”, “new relationship between great powers”, “interests community” and “harmonious world”, etc. need to solve this problem; additionally, transformation of current international system also need to take it into consideration.

1. What is Interest Reconstruction in International Relations?

The contemporary world is experiencing unprecedented rearrangement of interest i.e., interest reconstruction. During the Cold War, the boundary of interest between east and west two camps, socialist country and capitalist country were entirely different. It seemed there's only confrontation between two systems and two ideologies instead of a fusion of interest. Since the end of the Cold War, range of application using “pure” ideology and social system criteria for boundaries of national interest has been narrowing. Particularly unprecedented

breadth and depth of interest relevance that China has reached with western countries and other newly emerging powers by virtue of economic globalization and the progress integrating into the world trade market. Through long-term institutional innovation and reform, socialist factors gradually accumulated within western countries¹, which also create conditions for interests' reconstruction of the international relations. Socialist market economy, economic globalization, global governance, peace and development together make up historical background of international interests reconstruction.

Interest reconstruction of the international relations mainly manifests in the following several aspects:

Firstly, reconstruction of economic interest within each international actor. Market interest exists objectively, cost and benefit of market communication balance out, and net profit of each party is the interest. Trade and investment exchanges of China with other countries reflects flow trend of factors of the world market. When a portion of world market factors flow into China, another portion of Chinese market factors flow into other countries, interest reconstruction appears. With the gradual stabilization of such factors mobility, a new interests structure stands up to the world, which is the reconstruction of economic interest. Among reorganization and reconstruction of all the national interest, economic interest reconstruction is the most fundamental one. According to the figures by the China's Customs, Sino-American trade stood at USD 5 million in 1971; after President Nixon's visit to China in 1973, the value of Sino-American trade increased to USD 260 million. In 1979, the value was USD 2.45 billion; after four decades since first visit of Nixon to China, this figure has climbed to USD 446.7 billion, which was 180 times at the time of diplomatic ties was established between two countries, and China and the U.S. were each other's second largest trade partner². It mentioned in the speech given by Nixon at his first visit to China that "common interest of China and U.S.", however, he never imagined such great common economic interest can be constructed between China and U.S. As another example, bilateral trade volume of China-Korea has amounted to total amount of Korea-U.S. plus Korea-Japan trade volume in 2012. Such superimposed effect of economic interest exceeded the significance of the U.S.-Korea military alliance for national interest of Korea. Similar structure has appeared between China and EU, China and Australia as

1 Gao F., Social Capitalism is the Highest Stage of Capitalism[In Chinese], *Jiangnan Tribune*, 2001 (8):45.

2 http://www.china.com.cn/v/zhuanti/2012-02/24content_24724135.htm.

well as China and Japan. In other words, interdependent relationship between China and the developed countries, namely western countries has become one of major supports for the whole world market system, or they have become mutually "stakeholders". This is the strategic significance of international economic interest reconstruction.

Secondly, security interest reconstruction of state actor and non-state actor. Interest reconstruction in this field is most conspicuous in the category of traditional security interests tends to be narrower, while the scope of non-traditional interest is continuously expanding. The reason why non-traditional security problems are different from traditional security is the former is more social, transnational and global, and these characteristics provide unprecedented historical conditions for mutual combination of non-traditional security interests of each country. On the one hand, non-traditional security interest is intertwined with interest structure in economic, social and cultural field etc., which makes the reconstruction of security interest show the characteristics of inferiority and extensiveness; on the other hand, traditional security interest, namely the threat of war among countries reduces significantly, security threat among countries is often embodied through the conflict forms of nation, religion, resource and ecology, etc. After 9 · 11, America told enemies from friends with "counter-terrorism" as a center at one time, and other great powers also cooperated with America to make up world-wide anti-terror alliance. This is the interest reconstruction exceeding traditional security range, which could have been the foundation for new pattern of relationship between great powers. However, because America continues to stick to its security thinking of hegemony and Cold War, who fights to infiltrate traditional security strategy into non-traditional security interest to make security interest reconstruction of great powers die on the vine. Despite all this, the pattern features of security interest reconstruction have been revealed.

Thirdly, social interest reconstruction of different multinational actors. Transnational social interest is closely related to transnational security interest and transnational economic interest, which is mainly shown in the interest reconstruction of international relations from transnational flow of all the social factors. With the development of economic globalization, international mobility moves great fortune, culture, personal relationship and other resources from one country to another. Such kind of outflow, inflow and convection obscures original national interest, making the peripheral portions of the national interest overlap and integrate, and also continuously infiltrates and penetrates into hard core of national interest. Since the 21st century, personnel and information flow

appears between China and America and even China and other western countries is unprecedentedly frequent, massive fortune immigration appears, which profoundly changes interest structure between China and western countries. Suppose the investment amount a Chinese investment immigrant brings to Canada is averagely 1 million Canadian dollars, then 1 million Chinese investment immigrants will bring 1 trillion Canadian dollars to Canada, and this number is enough to brace Canada for the impact from American financial crisis in 2008. This shows that reconstruction of interest of international community should be enough to cause the reconstruction of international economic interest and even political interest. For another example, talent resources and all expenses paid out for Chinese students studying in main English speaking countries, which has become an important source for university competitiveness of these countries, as well as become the foundation for China and western countries to carry out cooperation in science, technology and education, while the interest reconstruction it in turn generates is more than what a family needs to cultivate offspring. It is not merely the educational interest reconstruction among related countries; it will eventually break down technical barrier and cultural barriers.

Therefore, if superimposing the interest reconstruction in the field of economy, security, society and culture, a kind of systematic international interest reconstruction will be formed. Such kind of international interest reconstruction is defined beyond traditional definition of core national interest, namely whether basic system is overturned, sovereignty is violated and whether the territory is complete, etc. In other words, with the progress of international interest reconstruction, the core national interest is transforming. The transformation mainly results from interest overlapping among great powers. The more the portion of interest overlaps, the greater the portion of interest transforms¹. On the contrary, the smaller the portion of interest overlaps among great powers, the less the form and content of interest reconstruction will be, and there will be more confrontation and conflicts among traditional core interest. It can be regarded as major characteristics of interest reconstruction in the contemporary international relations, and from this the space for increasing point of interest reconstruction among great powers can be found out.

2. Primary Path for Interest Reconstruction in International Relations

The way or path of international relationship interest reconstruction is

1 http://www.china.com.cn/v/zhuanti/2012-02/24content_24724135.htm.

embodied in openness, dependency, penetrability, compromise and growth of the interest. Due to profound changes of global market system and international security pattern, interest of any country cannot exist isolatedly, nor can keep its original interest morphology changeless. In the modern world, minority middle and small countries maintain their national interest with a closed and stagnant mode, and the result is not only their core interest can be protected, but they are also in the position suffering from survival threats and even are overturned and occupied. Even though traditional great powers or super powers maintain their national interest in the closed and stagnant manner, they will also be trapped in a strategic dilemma, and the difference is only the occurrence of their strategic crisis will be relatively slow. From a long-term and overall perspective, denying the characteristics of openness, mobility and dependency, etc. of the interest reconstruction in international relations can only but lead to shrinkage and loss of national interest.

Openness and mobility of interest reconstruction in international relationship is finally reflected in mutual interdependency among major powers. No matter it is the economic interest, security interest or social interest, the main way for interest reconstruction is the interest independency. As long as openness of international relations and mobility of international factors can be maintained, mutual interdependency of international interest will be generated and deepened. This kind of mutual interdependency includes the interdependence of common interests as well as common threats, and factor mobility of positive energy as well as negative energy. Due to different impact that interests and threats exerted on different countries, the role that factors mobility of positive and negative factors play also varies from countries to countries, which makes differences in the degree of interdependency that interest reconstruction generates. For example, country A has 70% dependence on country B, and country B has 30% dependence on country A, which means the greater dependence of country A, the less interest it will gain, on the contrary, the less dependence of country B, the greater interest it will gain.

During such interest reconstruction, “sensitivity” and “fragility” are two essential indicators for measuring interdependency. If sensitivity and fragility of participants in interaction are close to each other, then it shows symmetric relation between two participants, conversely, it shows asymmetric relation. Therefore, changing dependency and avoiding excessive inflow of negative factors become the strategic choice for weak countries in the process of interest reconstruction. It is generally recognized that strong countries with lower

dependency and factors outflow advantages tend to be main party making profit in the process of international interest reconstruction. Therefore, strong countries usually are unwilling to change the established international interest structure i.e. international system and mechanism in this process. They are alert of interest reconstruction which is possibly brought by newly emerging countries' attempt at changing system and rules.

However, objective laws of the world political and economic structure changes will eventually change global interest structure solidified by irrational international order. Profound changes are taking place in interest dependency and interest relevance between traditional great powers and newly arisen big powers, among which economic interest interdependency changes between America and China is especially typical. Before the financial crisis in 2008, export dependence of China on American market and import dependence of America on China's commodity is the main connotation of the economic interdependency between two countries. However, after the financial crisis, the dependence of America on Chinese investment and China's dependence on American technology have greatly improved. It can be predicted that the combination of China's capital and America's technology, together with interdependency of these two biggest domestic markets will exercise a decisive influence on the reconstruction of the whole world economic interest.

Interest penetration and integration among countries are important ways for the interest reconstruction in international relations. Interest penetration and integration have active and passive status. Normally a strong side is the initiative side and weak side is passive side; however in real international relations, weak side is also taking initiative to play a role in active integration. Central zone formed between own side and the other side in interest constitution is the penetration and integration part of bilateral or multilateral interest. When interest penetration and integration develop from accidental and individual situation to normal and overall situation, there's possibility for interest reconstruction to change into interest institutionalization and systematization, which is also the main basis for the formation and development of regional cooperative mechanism and integration organization. History of the EU's forming is the profound proof of direct promoting effect that interest penetration and integration plays on regional integration. From coal and steel community to common market, from EEC to EU and from monetary integration to political diplomacy integration, the process for interest reconstruction of EU has become the blueprint for almost all the regional organizations' development. We can see that there exists severe

obstacle of interest reconstruction in EU after the financial crisis, but massive interest risk contained in the breakup of the EU was too high for EU state members to bear. It has been an unavoidable historical choice for EU to develop from monetary integration to fiscal integration. Therefore, regional cooperation mechanism established on the basis of interest penetration and integration as well as integration process based on regional cooperation is two stages of interest reconstruction in international relations. These two stages are not progressive relations completely, which also have the relations of synchronous crossover and even repeated crossover. In different areas of Asia, America and Africa, etc., due to interest weights and interest structure difference of each interested party, the difference in the interest penetration and integration as well as in the process of regional integration will also arise, but general trend of this kind of interest reconstruction is basically consistent.

Interest transfer and compromise is another important path for interest reconstruction. Slightly different from objective process of interest penetration and integration, interest transfer and compromise is more of subjective choice. The state actor is always the subject in such kind of interest reconstruction no matter it belongs to involuntary transfer under external pressure or autonomous compromise under the strategic goal. Before World War II and during the period of Cold War, strategic interest conflict of great powers is always associated with sphere of influence division, or realizes appeasement by sacrificing interests of small countries, or realizes interest subdivision by strong control of great power and strategic retreat of another great power. In the contemporary international relations, interest compromise among great powers tends to give way of partial position and appeals at the time of touching the third party dispute and confrontation of two parties. By this moment, the emphasis of great powers interest reconstruction is shifting from consolidating the sphere of influence and allies system to keep right of initiative and speech in international rules. The component of soft strength is gradually increasing in the competition, while connotation of hard strength plays second fiddle step by step, so the likelihood of the compromise increases than before.

In the process of interest reconstruction, what newly developed great powers and middle and small countries adopt is to exchange the acknowledgement form these great powers by means of interest transfer about the rise of international status and the expansion of development space. Different from historic conventions in which the rise of great powers will inevitably pose a challenge to the existing hegemonic power, break original international system

and even trigger world war, the rise of the contemporary newly developed countries can almost keep peace with the existing hegemonic system, one of important modes is to partially transfer their own interest in their rising to gain the position and space in the current international system. In the process of joining WTO, China, India and Russia all accepted international trade rules and transferred partial domestic market interest to different extent so as to gain official membership of WTO. Facts proved that the transfer is beneficial for newly developed powers to expand their development space. In the area of security, especially in weapons of mass destruction controlled area, most middle and small countries are subject to the restriction of related international mechanism, who transfer their partial interest to international supervision mechanism as a way of compromise. But few countries refusing to accept international mechanism and insisting on no interest transfer finally are caught in an isolated dilemma. Thus, it can be seen that interest transfer has become an important strategy for the newly developed countries to exchange for the rise of status, which is also a major cause for the contemporary international system to keep stable and peaceful transition.

The nature of interest reconstruction in international relations lies in new common interest growing point formed among countries. It means there appears new area of interest among great powers and between great powers and small countries. These new areas can be called as "global governance system" or "global commons", which are different from interest interdependency or compromise in bilateral relations, while they are a series of new issues and new fields that appeared in recent two or three decades and have never been encountered. The reasons for their generation include: firstly, due to the development of globalization, original international system is difficult to adapt and needs reform, such as international monetary policy, UN peacekeeping mechanism and so on. Secondly, because of rapid development of scientific and technological productive forces, human activities start to enter the large-scale space which is hard to enter in the past, for example, outer space, deep ocean and polar region problems, etc., needing to establish new operating and management rules. Thirdly, because of severe imbalance and unsustainable world development, poverty, resources, ecology, climate and other problems have become common challenge faced by future fate of human being, which requires various countries, especially great powers to assume "common and distinctive responsibilities". Fourthly, serious network security and hacker problems generate due to network and global information flow, which combines with international terrorism, cross-border drug smuggling, human trafficking, money laundering and other transnational

criminal networks to become one of main challenges of global governance. Aforementioned new fields and challenges are common dangers faced by each country, so they become a new series of common interest growing points.

Taking network security issue as an example, on the surface, recent "U.S. surveillance program PRISM" is the conflict of interest among great powers, but actually it's also the growing point among these great powers. Because network hacker is the "anarchy in the cyberspace" revolting against state authority, which not only threatens the security of the U.S., but also poses threats to Russia and China. What Edward Snowden, Wikileaks and other individuals and institutions reflected is a kind of extreme power that netizens resolve against the country. As for overall existence of humans, their destructive power is greater than constructive power. It also proves that western countries, especially America participates in security threats activities against other countries, but eventually America itself will be under threat. It is like the way of America, who makes use of international terrorism as its own international political tools, while what it finally cultivated is the al-Qaeda posing threat to homeland security of America itself. If America cannot learn lessons from it and persists in making use of network to threat and overturn other countries, then network security and even legal order of various countries in the world will be disrupted fundamentally, global governance or even the domestic governance would become no more than empty words. Therefore, network security is becoming common governance issues among great powers, as well as becoming new growing point of common security interest. A great number of interest generation spaces like this will continue to appear, which will become the main impetus of interest reconstruction in international relations.

In a word, interest flow and dependence, interest penetration and integration, interest transfer and compromise as well as interest harmonious intergrowth and coexistence, etc. in international relations form complicated path and multiple platforms of interest reconstruction, which indicates that interest reconstruction is becoming or have become a universal and long-term global trend.

3. Value Reconstruction in International Relations

Value is the reflection of interest. There's no value without interest as its basis. Value is a long-term judgment of the interest. When rising to mental state, the interest will become into the value. Deeper level of the value is still material. Reconstruction of the interest also reflects the necessity of value reconstruction, namely reconstruction of the interest will inevitably lead to value reconstruction.

As far as China is concerned, first of all, value reconstruction in the contemporary international relations is embodied in repeated judgment for the value in the world system. After entering 21st century, China tends to instruct its international behaviors with value judgment of the world system or global governance system. China has been an important participant of global governance as well as an important promoter of the governance mechanism reform. The fast rate of transformation is beyond expectations of international society or even us. Five years ago, basically there's no mention of the concept of "global governance" on official document of China and only "global economic governance" was mentioned, and "globalization" was covered by "economic globalization". But in the report of the Eighteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China published in November 2012, it clearly mentioned "active participation in global economic governance", "facilitating the change of global governance mechanism", which indicates that value judgment that China made on global governance system has changed profoundly. When joining the WTO more than a decade ago, China avoided the concept of "trade liberalization" and "economic integration", yet now, these two concepts are not only widely used in theory, "to promote trade and investment liberalization" has been clearly identified in system construction and policy practice, and "China (Shanghai) Pilot Free Trade Zone" has been officially launched. If we go backwards to twenty years ago, the use of the concept of "growth limit" and "global warming" by Chinese authorities was especially cautious and meticulous, whereas these concepts have become main source and components of "scientific outlook on development".

Value reconstruction of international relations is also reflected in repeated value judgment of different international actors made on state actors and non-state actors. We should pay special attention to national value reconstruction of Chinese people. Chief value in the domain of Chinese political science has been the nation above everything else for a long time, which is associated with long-term feudalism history, planned economic system and the proletarian theory of state. However, judgment standard of political value of the state is vacillating. Such vacillation mainly comes from three sources: firstly, China's reform and opening up process is actually a process the government delegates powers to the market, monopoly control status of the state for resources is losing momentum; secondly, status and value of state actors rises sharply, gradually expanding from non-state behaviors start with market economy to all the social fields; thirdly, with the development of networked information, official information is no longer

the only information source. People start to make value judgment from multidimensional and multivariate perspectives. National value judgment changes of China may be one of the most important changes in the contemporary political various domains, this kind of change and development covers from low political field to high political field, from domestic politics to international politics, whose status and function is in an ascending process¹. As you can imagine, China's political judgment made by international society will inevitably change fundamentally several years later. Political value reconstruction of China is actually a formation process of socialist democratic politics system of Chinese characteristics. Once the road of China's political modernization gets success, there will a new political institution and mode selection in the world, which can provide reference for both western and non-western countries enmeshed in the trap of institution crisis. As a matter of fact, it is America and other traditional western great powers that maintain rigid political system. Western system deficiencies exposed by the financial crisis almost haven't been rethought seriously and reformed. No matter domestic governance or global governance, the countries of the world all need a kind of new value judgment, that is the tendency of political value collectively followed by state and non-state actors, which will bring people to an open, fair and reasonable society.

Value reconstruction of international relations also lies in the convergence of different culture value judgment. Because the existence of western political and economic strength, especially the existence of Britain and America hegemonic system for a long time, western values has long been the basic criteria for international relations value judgment. However, universality of this value standard and western institutional mode has been suspected by more and more international societies. Not only non-western countries and people are unwilling to accept value standard of western great countries, but also western middle and small countries are reluctant to accept value judgment made by the leader of alliance in western society, and even profound value divergences occurred within western great powers. For example, polarization of social value judgment between America's "Occupy Wall Street" movement and "Tea Party", which proves that crack appears in the core part of western values². In the meanwhile,

1 Lv Y.Z., The Tertiary Sector and International Politics[In Chinese], *Modern International Relations*, 2004 (2): 23.

2 "Occupy Wall Street" movement is a leftwing social movement. While "Tea Party" formed in 2009 carries with distinctively right-wing extremism color. Refer to Zhou Q., Shen P. Rethinking over "Occupy Wall Street" Movement, *World Economics and Politics*, 2012 (9): 86.