

# The Position and Function of Balance Diplomacy in the History of Modern International Relations

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**Abstract:** In ancient, modern and modern international relations, balance-of-power diplomacy, with its unique historical characteristics, shows the changes of the times and has a profound impact on international relations. Based on this, the paper analyses the status and role of balance of power diplomacy in the history of modern international relations. On the basis of a brief overview of the recent development of balance of power diplomacy in modern times, this paper takes Singapore's balance of power diplomacy as an example to analyze the impact of balance of power diplomacy on Sino-Singapore relations.

## 1. Introduction

Modern balance of power diplomacy is the product of capitalist system. It is a kind of diplomatic means widely adopted by Western powers in order to seek hegemony[1]. The Utrecht Peace Treaty of 1713 and the first Paris Peace Treaty of May 1814 explicitly stipulated that the purpose of the contracting parties was to establish a “genuine and permanent balance of power in Europe” and “maintain balance and ensure peace”. Modern balance-of-power diplomacy was gradually formed on the basis of the European nation-states' struggle for the hegemony of Europe and the sea. From the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, that is, from the late Middle Ages to the early modern times, with the opening up of maritime transportation, the expansion of World Trade and the strengthening of commodity-currency relations, capitalism developed, and accordingly a centralized nation-state was established. Disputes between feudal lords were replaced by hegemonic struggles among nations. In order to expand territory and seize market, modern balance of power diplomacy came into being[2]. Famous Western historians of international relations, such as A.J.P. Taylor, Seton-Watson and Henry Kissinger, explain the development of modern international relations from the viewpoint of balance of power. In recent years, the historians of international relations in China have also paid attention to the topic of balance of power diplomacy[3].

## 2. The Theory of Balanced Diplomacy

Balance of power, also known as balance of power, is one of the oldest, most lasting and most controversial theories in the study of international strategic theory[4]. Although the concept of balance of power appeared only in modern times, its practical application can be traced back to the Spring and Autumn Period and Warring States Period of ancient China[5], the ancient Indian Age and the ancient Greek Age. Balance of power has two meanings. In terms of its objective meaning, it refers to a state tending to balance[6]. In terms of its subjective meaning, it refers to a kind of policy, principle and theory. Morgenthau believes that in international relations, balance of power has four meanings: expressing the policy of pursuing a certain state of international relations; expressing a certain actual state of international relations; expressing that international forces are generally evenly distributed; and expressing the distribution of forces in any state[7]. In *Understanding International Conflicts*, Joseph Nye analyses the balance of power from three aspects: on the one hand, as a balance of power distribution, balance of power means any distribution of power, especially the current distribution of power; on the other hand, balance of power refers to a series of specific situations of balanced distribution of power. Second, as a kind of policy balance, that is, balance of power is a kind of policy balance, which indicates that the state will take action to

prevent any country from developing into a dominant power. Third, as a multipolar system, the equilibrium can be used to describe the multipolar state in history[8].

Balance of power diplomacy can only be pursued by big powers, not small ones. Webster, a scholar who specializes in the Vienna Conference, said that the Vienna Conference is a meeting of big powers with huge resources and armies. Small countries can only participate in L. A. on the conditions prescribed by big powers[9]. Every action of balance-of-power diplomacy is “expediency” (Webster), not long-term foreign policy. Metnier's tactics, for example, are as capricious as possible. Equilibrium diplomacy is not synonymous with peaceful diplomacy. In order to seek hegemony, great powers sometimes resort to force. The balance of power diplomacy always regards small and weak countries as the balance chips of big countries, arbitrarily slaughtering and dividing up the territory of small and weak countries. At the Vienna Conference, Poland and Saxony fell victim to the principle of compensation of great powers; Constantinople became the bait for the restoration of the Three Kings' Alliance; Morocco and Persia became the sacrifices of Anglo-French and Anglo-Russian consultations, etc. Equilibrium diplomacy always serves the power politics of big powers in an attempt to weaken the other side and strengthen itself, thus creating a favorable international power contrast to realize its hegemonic position[10].

### **3. The Role of Balance of Power Diplomacy in Modern International Relations**

#### **3.1. The connotation of singapore's power balance strategy**

As the formulator of national diplomatic strategy, Lee Kuan Yew and his colleagues all believe in the theory of realism and agree that the international society advocated by realist scholars is anarchic, and that the “jungle” is its manifestation. Singapore's national strength is weak, so it can not rely on itself to achieve national survival and development in such an international community. Singapore faces a difficult choice: first, the withdrawal of British troops in Singapore and Singapore's neutral policy during this period make it impossible to guarantee its own security by relying on other countries; secondly, it does not rely on any big country to maintain its neutral position among the big countries and to gain room for manoeuvre and survival under the situation of the balance of power formed by the mutual restraint of the big powers, which is a new addition. The best choice of Poe's diplomatic strategy. The specific connotation of Singapore's strategy of balance of power includes the following two aspects: one is to acknowledge the existence of the interests of the major powers in the region; the other is to form a balance of power between the two major powers.

The foreign policy makers of Singapore led by Lee Kuan Yew first acknowledged the fact that the great powers existed in Southeast Asia after the war. They believed that the continued existence and competition of the great powers in the region could not be changed. To face up to the role of the great powers in the development of Singapore and the region, the great powers had a continuing policy existence in the region. The reality of international politics is that big powers will maintain their vested interests and expand their power to the greatest extent for the sake of national interests. As small countries, they should encourage all big powers to recommend them on the basis of objective reality and use collective strength to get along with big powers safely and in a more advantageous position for themselves. On the basis of recognizing the existence and neglect of the great powers in Southeast Asia, Singapore believes that a balanced state of power among the great powers should be formed in accordance with the principle of uniform distribution of power, which is most conducive to their survival and development.

#### **3.2 Practice of great power balance diplomatic strategy in new china relations**

Singapore's strategy of balancing regional security with the help of the power of major powers is to ensure the stability of Southeast Asia by means of the balance of power structure, and at the same time, it can also obtain the largest space for diplomatic manoeuvre. As an important part of Asia, Lao Guo's foreign policy has a significant impact on the region. Similarly, Southeast Asia also plays

a vital role in China's foreign strategic deployment. From this we can see that China is an indispensable part of Singapore's strategy of balance of power. Objectively, Sino-Singapore relations have a long history due to the influence of geographic and ethnic factors. However, Singapore's development of China relations is not only based on the so-called "China Complex", but also on the consideration of national and regional stability. The changes in diplomatic strategy are shown in Figure 1.

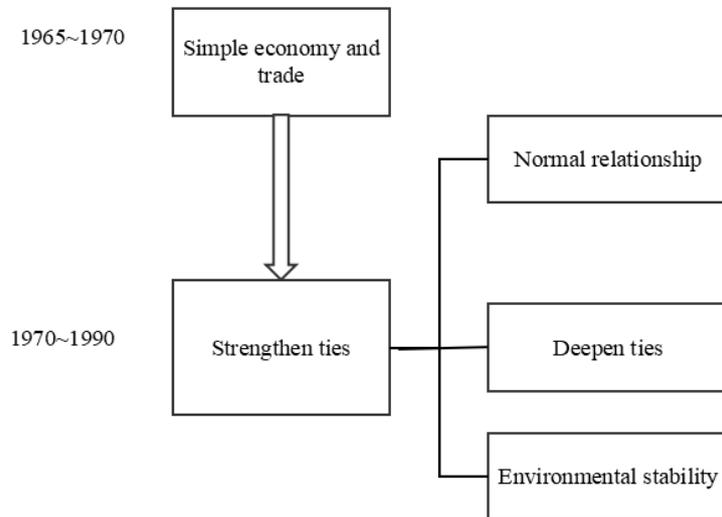


Fig.1. The changes in diplomatic strategy

As the designer and decision maker of Singapore's domestic and foreign policies, Lee Kuan Yew is deeply influenced by the western democratic rule of law. Singapore inherits the British parliamentary republic in its political system, which has both the characteristics of authoritarianism and democracy. Therefore, in the early period of independence, Singapore always kept a high degree of vigilance on the political aspects of socialist China and the spread of Communist ideology in Singapore, where Chinese dominated. Before the 1970s, although China took a neutral stand on Singapore's independence, political exchanges between the two countries were not smooth under the severe ideological struggle. Since the 1970s, the development of Sino-New Zealand relations has entered a new turning point due to changes in the international situation. In the Asia-Pacific region, the contradictions and conflicts between China and the Soviet Union, the two key forces of the socialist camp, are escalating, especially after the Treasure Island incident in 1969. In 1971, China resumed its legitimate seat in the United Nations. President Nixon's visit to China the following year promoted the normalization of Sino-US relations. At the same time, in order to curb the expansion of the Soviet Union in Southeast Asia, China also needs the support of Southeast Asian countries, including Singapore.

Lee Kuan Yew is keenly aware of the change of regional situation and the change of China's strategic position. The strategic contraction of the United States in Southeast Asia will inevitably lead to the expansion of the Soviet Union. In order to maintain the balance of power in the region, not only should the United States normalize its relations with China, but also the whole Southeast Asian countries should actively adjust their policies towards China and learn how to get along with China. Therefore, in the early 1970s, Singapore began to incorporate China into its strategy of balance of power, playing an important role as a new factor of checks and balances. Political exchange of visits. In this context, political exchanges of visits have become increasingly frequent. As the first formal political contact between the leaders of New Zealand and China, Singapore's Foreign Minister Jalarnan's visit to China in March 1975 marked that the political relations between the two countries had entered a substantial stage of development. In 1976, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew first visited China. During his visit, he made a clear statement on China's position in Singapore's diplomatic strategy, that is, China's strength is conducive to maintaining the balance of power and forming a more secure situation.

New China-China relations after the establishment of diplomatic relations: widening and

deepening in an all-round way. In February 1989, Indonesian President Suharto held talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen. The two countries agreed in principle to resume diplomatic relations. On August 8, 1990, the two sides formally resumed diplomatic relations. The resumption of relations between China and ASEAN countries has created a favorable surrounding environment for the further expansion of Sino-Singapore relations. With the resumption of diplomatic relations between Indonesia and China, Singapore immediately decided to formally establish diplomatic relations with China. On October 3, 1990, the foreign ministers of New York and China signed a communique on the establishment of diplomatic relations in New York, announcing the formal establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries from that date, and the relations between the two countries have since entered the stage of normalization. The normalization of Sino-New Zealand relations is mainly affected by the following three aspects. First of all, the normalization of Indonesia's foreign relations with China makes Singapore no longer have to worry about the suspicions and doubts of its neighbours, so that it can develop its relations with China with ease. In order to maintain sustained economic growth, Singapore has adopted an "internationalization" development strategy, which has shifted from relying solely on exports to developing overseas investment and economy. With the change of the world economic growth situation, the focus of its economic strategy has naturally shifted to China, the center of the Asia-Pacific region. Against this background, facing the new situation and changes in the international political and economic pattern, the two countries agreed to take jointly promoting world peace and development, maintaining regional stability and economic prosperity as the guiding principles of their relations, and showed a good momentum of development after entering the 21st century.

After the establishment of diplomatic relations between Singapore and China, the relationship between the two countries has entered a new historical stage. While strengthening political exchanges and economic and trade cooperation, the relationship between the two sides should be broadened and deepened in education and culture. In the political field. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, high-level leaders have exchanged frequent visits. The leaders of the two countries, the Prime Minister of the government and ministers of various ministries have met constantly to maintain dialogue in various ways, so as to deepen understanding and enhance friendship between the two countries and promote the sustained and healthy development of the two countries. Lee Kuan Yew's emphasis on Sino-New Zealand relations is an important driving force for the progress of Sino-New Zealand relations. During his tenure as Prime Minister of Singapore, he visited China four times. After serving as Senior Minister of the Singapore Cabinet, he visited China almost every year throughout the 1990s.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In short, balance-of-power diplomacy has played an important role in the past. In international relations, every capitalist country always demands that its international status, economic and political interests and the scope of power it has seized should be commensurate with its own strength. In international struggle, temporary alliances and alliances have to be carried out, as well as with the strength of their newly integrated group of countries. To maintain the balance of power in a certain period of time, countries should also consider the strength of the contrast as the starting point. As a result, countries have concluded various alliances and agreements, which are constantly changing with the development of their own strength in the face of conflicts and conflicts.

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