

The Struggle for Autonomy of Weak States under Asymmetric Alliances: Based on the Case Comparison Between Philippines and South Korea

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Abstract: The need for diplomatic autonomy of weaker states in asymmetric alliances rises as their power increases, leading to a struggle for autonomy. In the U.S. Asia-Pacific alliance system, both the Philippines and South Korea are advancing the struggle for autonomy, but the effects of the struggle are showing differences. So why is the Philippines' struggle for autonomy relatively more effective while South Korea's struggle is less effective when it is the same U.S. Asia-Pacific ally? This study mainly applies the case comparison method to analyze the main factors that cause the different effects of the autonomy struggle between the two countries by comparing the autonomy struggle in the Philippines after Duterte came to power and in South Korea after Moon Jae-in came to power. This paper argues that the factors that contribute to the different effects of autonomous struggle are mainly strategic dependence and the degree of interest bundling and acquisition at the external level, the degree of sovereign security and domestic political preference at the internal level, and the effective conditions for the autonomous struggle of weak states are also related to this. This study will provide insights into the struggle for autonomy of weak states in asymmetric relations and offer new perspectives for predicting the direction of the U.S. alliance system and the positioning of Korean-Philippine policy.

Keywords: asymmetric alliance, struggle for autonomy, weak state diplomacy, U.S. Asia-Pacific alliance system

1. Introduction

Asymmetric alliances are now an important manifestation of bilateral or multilateral alliances in the world, and the U.S.-Philippine and U.S.-Korea alliances are representative of asymmetric alliances. In an asymmetric alliance, the non-dominant state often faces the problem of autonomy requirements. Different countries also produce different struggles for autonomy. In the Philippines, the U.S. and the Philippines have formed a new pattern of interests, and the traditional U.S.-Philippine alliance has adjusted and gradually reached a cooperative equilibrium. The fundamental goal of the U.S. alliance with the Philippines is to preserve Asia-Pacific dominance, while the Philippines wants to preserve its gains. The Philippines' struggle for autonomy is moving towards being pro-US but not anti-China, while the US conceded to allow it to bargain based on not completely falling to China. The Philippines' struggle for autonomy seems to have yielded the

desired results. In the U.S.-Korea alliance, the U.S. focused on Asia-Pacific security and South Korea focused on peninsula politics. South Korea has likewise increased its calls for diplomatic autonomy, but in reality, it has no intention of abandoning the alliance and has to take into account the U.S. and keep compromising to follow the U.S. policy. The U.S.-Korea alliance continues to strengthen, and South Korea's struggle for autonomy has not yielded effective results. This study is therefore based on the following questions: The Philippines and South Korea are both Asia-Pacific allies of the United States and both aspire to gain autonomy and improve their international standing through the struggle for autonomy, yet why has the struggle been less effective in South Korea and relatively more effective in the Philippines?

According to the definition of scholars such as Terence and Stephen, an alliance is a formal or informal cooperation agreement between two or more countries based on national security issues [1, 2]. Tang Shiping considers the alliance as asymmetric when the product of the total GDP and GDP per capita of a large country turns out to be more than twice that of a small country [3]. Thus, an asymmetric alliance is an alliance form in which there is a great asymmetry between the dominant and subordinate states in terms of power, strategic goals, and demands.

By summarizing the available studies, there are currently several major academic explanatory paths for affecting the outcomes of struggles for autonomy. The first is state power theory, which argues that increasing power makes the state's demand for autonomy rise and thus affects the outcome of the autonomy struggle [4, 5]. The second is state interest theory. Scholars argue that states will weigh the costs and benefits of participating in alliances and non-alliances [6-9]. This interpretation assumes that both dominant and weak states will change their attitudes toward the autonomy struggle in response to changes in interest perceptions or changes in threat perceptions [10, 11]. The third is the international structure and domestic preferences theory. This interpretation argues that the international system may affect the role that weak states can play [12]. Different domestic political preferences will likely change alliance strategies and will have an impact on the struggle, which may be reluctant to maintain their previous commitments [13, 14].

In conclusion, there has been some academic research on the struggle for autonomy, but there are still shortcomings. First, a systematic and direct explanatory model has not yet been reached, and the depth and breadth of the existing explanations remain to be examined. For example, the domestic preference theory tacitly prioritizes domestic politics over national interests. The combination of factors theory lacks an account of primary and secondary factors. Second, the conditions for the role of independent variables are not clearly stated, and more operationalized measures and defined contexts are still needed. Third, the existing studies lack comparative analysis of cases, and the studies on the U.S.-Philippine alliance are far fewer than those on Japan and Korea. The existing research lacks a systematic summary of the optimal path for the struggle for autonomy.

Thus, this paper will focus on the struggle for autonomy of weak states in asymmetric alliances, starting with the two cases of the struggle for autonomy in the Philippines after Duterte came to power and in South Korea after Moon Jae-in came to power. Next, summarizing the paths of the struggle for autonomy in the two countries, the paper will then analyze the main factors that caused the different effects of the struggle for autonomy in the two countries. Finally, the paper will explore the optimal path of autonomy struggle for weak states, i.e., the conditions under which weak states can have a basis for struggle and how they can gain more autonomy under asymmetric alliance relations. This paper will mainly use the case comparison method and will analyze the Korean and Filipino struggle for autonomy in specific parallel periods separately, and the study will be based on a controlled comparison of these two cases.

In terms of doctrinal significance, this study will enrich the academic research related to the path of autonomy struggle of weak states. In terms of practical significance, this study will provide a

reference for the struggle for autonomy of weak states in asymmetric alliances and their future strategic direction, and provide some implications for alliance risk avoidance.

2. Case Reduction: The Struggle for Weak State Ownership

2.1. Philippines' Struggle for Autonomy

The formal signing of the U.S.-Philippine Mutual Defense Treaty in 1951 marked the formal establishment of the U.S.-Philippine alliance. The Philippines supports U.S. influence in Asia and curbs socialist influence, while the U.S. assists in the Philippines. The disagreement between China and the Philippines over sovereignty in the South China Sea and the continued deterioration of Sino-Philippine relations have indirectly pushed the Philippines to strengthen the U.S.-Philippine alliance. During the Aquino administration, it asked the U.S. to intervene in the South China Sea, deploying military forces in the Sea and signing several agreements with the U.S.

The Philippines' approach to foreign policy has changed considerably since Duterte came to power. Duterte is more concerned with economic development. On the diplomatic front, the Duterte administration and the Obama administration have frequently clashed, the Duterte administration has changed the Aquino administration's pro-U.S. and anti-China attitude, the U.S.-Philippine relationship has become slightly distant, and the Philippines has started to actively work on establishing friendly relations with China. Duterte is tough on the U.S.'s interference, making it clear that the Philippines is no longer a vassal state of the U.S. He also refused to serve as a springboard for U.S. involvement in the South China Sea, terminated the Visiting Forces Agreement with the U.S., and even called for the end of the U.S.-Philippine alliance. Although the Trump administration later adopted a positive attitude toward the Philippines and invited Duterte to visit the U.S. several times, Duterte still refused to visit the U.S. Faced to rebuild the U.S.-Philippine alliance in the Biden administration's policy, Duterte continued to have reservations about military cooperation with the United States in the South China Sea. He insisted on not directly intervening in the conflict between China and the United States, proposed a foreign policy of "balance of powers" and "non-dependence on the United States", and remained detached from the U.S.-Philippine alliance [15]. At the same time, the Philippines has improved relations with China, participated in the Belt and Road and the ADB, strengthened multilateral cooperation with Japan and South Korea, and other countries, and continuously reduced the degree of demand for the U.S.-Philippine alliance [16]. While the U.S.-Philippine relationship has been fractured, the Trump administration's "Indo-Pacific Strategy" has focused more on allies such as India and related countries such as the Quadripartite Mechanism. The Philippines has not been a focus of U.S. strategy, which has reduced the Philippines' status among U.S. allies.

The adjustment of Philippine policy toward the United States is a manifestation of the struggle for diplomatic autonomy. As Duterte put it, "The Philippines has the right to choose its policy without interference from other countries" [17]. The result is that the U.S. is allowing it to bargain based on not falling to China. The U.S.-Philippine alliance is not as close as before, but cooperation between the two is generally smoother, while the Philippines' dependence on the U.S. is decreasing and its autonomy is increasing.

2.2. South Korea's Struggle for Autonomy

The U.S.-Korea Alliance has been characterized as "U.S.-dominated and Korea-affiliated," with the main goal of countering external threats. South Korea has developed an alliance policy of exchanging autonomy for security. However, South Korea's pursuit of diplomatic autonomy is gradually strengthening. This paper focuses on part of Moon's struggle for diplomatic autonomy.

Moon Jae-in hopes to try his best to improve inter-Korean relations and build a peace mechanism on the peninsula. In the face of the Trump administration's "extreme pressure" policy, the Moon administration's attitude toward North Korea is more moderate. Moon's "Berlin Initiative" in 2017 and the U.S.-South Korea 2+2 talks in 2021 are examples of this. South Korea proposed to deepen inter-Korean economic cooperation, but the U.S. has repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction and pressured South Korea to join sanctions against North Korea. Of South Korea's desire to dismantle some policies that affect inter-Korean cooperation, Trump is giving warning that South Korea can do nothing without U.S. approval [18]. In response to the hard-line U.S. policy toward the DPRK, the Moon Jae-in administration eventually compromised, and some friendship policies with the DPRK came to a halt.

South Korea also does not exactly overlap with the U.S. in its policy toward China. As a key U.S. ally, South Korea follows the U.S. policy toward China. However, South Korea has strong economic ties with China. South Korea hopes to develop friendly relations with China while continuing to maintain the U.S.-South Korea alliance. South Korea uses its partnership with China only as a hedge, far less important than the U.S.-Korea alliance. Under the influence of U.S. checks and balances on China, South Korea's autonomous diplomacy with China is limited.

In terms of alliance cooperation with the U.S., South Korea insists on strengthening alliance relations and enhancing U.S. security protection, but at the same time enhancing its security protection autonomy. Moon Jae-in's government has proposed "autonomous national defense" and promulgated a medium-term national defense plan in 2020 and a "Korea-type three-axis combat system" by 2023. Moon Jae-in also called for the withdrawal of wartime combat guidance and promised to complete it during his term. However, the 2017 Korea-U.S. Defense Cooperation Guidelines only agreed on a conditional return of command authority, and the two countries did not reach an agreement on the return of command authority in the 2020 U.S.-Korea Security Conference, leaving the U.S. with a more ambiguous attitude. On the issue of defense costs for U.S. forces stationed in South Korea, the United States has continuously demanded that South Korea bear more costs, such as Trump's demand in 2017 that South Korea bear the cost of SAD. South Korea argued that the total cost was too large, the increase was unreasonable, etc., but the U.S. did not budge. The U.S. military presence in South Korea has been strengthening since the deployment of SAD, and the security alliance has tended to get closer. This is demonstrated for example by the establishment of the U.S.-South Korea Joint Artillery Brigade for the defense of inter-Korean relations in 2018 [19]. Overall, South Korea, despite its struggle for autonomy, has avoided undermining the U.S.-Korea alliance, and in some ways has even strengthened it instead.

3. Causes of Differences in Diplomatic Autonomy Between the Philippines and South Korea

The outcome of the pursuit of diplomatic autonomy by non-dominant states in asymmetric alliances is usually influenced by several factors. Based on the above cases, the exploration of this research question continues: Why have the Philippines gained more autonomy in asymmetric relationships compared to Korea? In this study, the U.S. was chosen as the dominant allied country to ensure a certain degree of scientific validity, and the two case studies were controlled to overlap in time. The paper will then explore other major factors that led to the different outcomes of the autonomy struggle between the two countries.

The American scholar Robert Putnam has proposed the two-layer game theory, which argues that both international-level factors and domestic-level factors affect the outcome of international negotiations [20]. The combination of international and domestic constraints will ultimately lead to the best interests of the country and a winning set. Based on Putnam's two-tier game theory, this

study considers that the analysis factors can be developed from both international and domestic aspects, and summarizes several major influencing factors.

3.1. Influencing Factors at the International Level

Influencing factors at the international level include the extent to which weak and dominant countries need each other. The degree of demand is determined by strategic dependence, bundling of interests, and access.

3.1.1.Strategic Dependence

Strategic dependence mainly refers to the existence of interdependent parts of the strategy of states, such as strategic intentions aimed at third-party threats. The dominant state relies on the weak state to play a counterbalancing role, and the weak state depends on the dominant state for security. Strategic dependence makes strategies dependent on each other. The existence of the irreplaceability of the other party for its strategy enhances the level of demand for both parties.

The U.S.-Philippine alliance lies in addressing the common threat. The 2010 U.S. National Security Strategy report indicated that the Asia-Pacific would be the focus of U.S. attention. The 2017 report and the 2022 report similarly continued the threat perception of China [21, 22]. Asia-Pacific affairs have become a strategic priority for the United States. However, since the Indo-Pacific strategy, its strategic focus has become more concentrated on Japan, India, Australia, etc., and its strategic dependence on the Philippines has decreased.

The Philippines saw China's sovereignty over the South China Sea as a threat before Aquino III and primarily followed the United States. With Duterte in power, the Philippine strategy is focused on safeguarding its interests, developing its economy with regional partners, forming a balanced diplomacy among major powers, and creating a quality external environment of peace and stability for its development. The Philippines' strategic dependence on the U.S. is reduced.

As a U.S. ally in the Asia-Pacific, South Korea has an irreplaceable role in dealing with North Korea, China, and other countries, and the U.S. has a high degree of strategic dependence on South Korea. Since Moon took office, the U.S. and South Korea have diverged on several strategies, and South Korea intends to develop a comprehensive and integrated multilateral diplomacy, but the overall focus remains on the U.S.-Korea alliance, relying on the U.S. alliance to enhance U.S. security protection for it. Despite the strategic differences between South Korea and the U.S., South Korea still makes frequent compromises and concessions in the face of U.S. assertiveness, and South Korea has a high degree of strategic dependence on the U.S.

3.1.2.Benefit Bundle Degree and Acquisition Amount

The degree of benefit bundling points to whether there is a certain degree of overlapping interests between the two countries. A forced split could lead to a loss of interest for both parties. Both the existing benefits and the expected benefits influence the state's choice of whether to continue to maintain the alliance.

The United States can provide security benefits to the Philippines, and the bundle of benefits has declined due to strategic changes. The Philippines intensified its pursuit of autonomy when it found that the security gains from the alliance were not sufficient to cover the costs of autonomy paid. The U.S.-Philippine alliance is expected to bring limited benefits to the U.S., and the lack of U.S. attention to the Philippines further reduces the degree of bundling of benefits. Meanwhile, Sino-Philippine relations have further become friendly. Economic ties between China and the Philippines have further deepened, with China becoming the largest trading partner of the Philippines for six consecutive years [23]. The Philippines' economic ties to China will also hedge against the U.S.-

Philippine bundle. Thus the Philippines intensifies its struggle for autonomy and achieves a certain autonomy effect.

The U.S.-Korea alliance also focuses on military interests and security interests. The peninsula issue is a historical legacy, and South Korea's ability to maintain security is difficult. The benefits that the alliance can bring will meet its needs, so South Korea chooses to exchange autonomy for security guarantees. South Korea has a great role for the U.S. in its policy toward North Korea and China, and the benefits that South Korea can bring to the U.S. are in line with current needs and future expectations. This has deepened the U.S. bundle of benefits in Korea. Economic and trade ties between China and South Korea are also deepening, and China is also South Korea's largest trading partner [24]. However, cooperation with China in South Korea's autonomous diplomacy will not provide sufficient security benefits, and great power competition will further constrain South Korea by impacting the benefits it can obtain from countries other than the United States.

In comparison, the U.S.-Korea alliance has a higher degree of bundled benefits, and it is likely to last long. The benefits that the Philippines can obtain from the alliance do not offset the costs, while the number of benefits that South Korea can obtain will better meet its needs. The benefits that the U.S. can obtain from the U.S.-Korea alliance are also more in line with its strategic requirements than from the U.S.-Philippines alliance.

In summary, the U.S. has different levels of need for the Philippines and South Korea. While the Philippines' importance in the U.S. Asia-Pacific strategic framework has decreased, the U.S. needs South Korea more for its strategy. Thus the U.S. has a higher level of need for South Korea. The Philippines and South Korea do not have the same level of demand for the U.S. South Korea's security needs have led to more dependence on the United States. The Philippines do not have directionally aligned strategic needs for the U.S. So on all levels Korea may have more demand for the U.S.

3.2. Influencing Factors at the International Level

3.2.1. Degree of Sovereign Security

State sovereignty is a state in which the supreme and fundamental power of the state to conduct its own internal and external affairs independently and autonomously is not threatened or infringed upon. Both South Korea and the Philippines are under some degree of threat to their sovereign security from the United States. Their military alliances with the United States and related military exercises on their territories undermine their sovereign security to a greater or lesser extent. In addition to this, geopolitically, the Philippines is an island nation surrounded by relatively friendly neighbors. The Philippines itself has a relatively high degree of sovereign security and a low need to seek external security protection.

In contrast, due to geopolitical factors, South Korea faces threats to its sovereign security from North Korea, and the frequent and continuous conflicts between the two Koreas make South Korea feel threatened and insecure about it, which makes South Korea's sovereignty less secure. Thus the elite groups in Korea who felt insecure prompted Korea to seek help and protection from the United States, exchanging autonomy for security, and the outcome of the struggle for Korean autonomy was affected accordingly.

Thus, sovereign security, as the basis of foreign policy, has a more obvious impact on the outcome of the struggle for autonomy in the Philippines and South Korea.

3.2.2. Political Elites and Interest Groups.

Political elites, which in this paper mainly refer to the subjects of national policy-making, have a great direct influence on national political practices, and their personal upbringing and educational

backgrounds affect decision-making preferences. Interest groups play an important role in political and public decision-making in some countries and will likely influence the struggle for autonomy through direct or indirect means.

The Philippine policy has a strong personal touch with the leaders, while Philippine party politics is a distinctive family politics, with its family oligarchs having great influence. Elected presidents have come to power with the support of political family forces. Filipino policymakers and their families have widely divergent decision-making preferences. The Aquino III government is pro-Alliance and has a low level of autonomy to pursue. The Duterte government favors anti-Alliance, independent diplomacy, and a balance of power strategy with a high degree of autonomy to pursue. On the one hand, Duterte is more pragmatic in his policies, focusing on people's livelihoods, and demanding more autonomy. On the other hand, Duterte does not have closer ties with the United States and is influenced by anti-Americanism. In addition, most of the Philippine political elites support the U.S.-Philippine alliance, such as its former Congressman Rene, who has said that the Philippines' most important diplomatic relationship is with the United States. However, many elites believe that the Philippines must not rely too much on the United States and needs to explore its autonomy, arguing that the Philippines has gained little from its military cooperation with the United States.

South Korea's President Moon Jae-in belongs to the Common Democratic Party and has mainly inherited the policies of Kim Dae-Jung and Roh Moo-hyun. Moon's experience shows that he cares about people's rights, values equality, and advocates more autonomy in foreign policy. Although the Moon Jae-in government is more supportive of the struggle for autonomy, Moon Jae-in still maintains a positive attitude toward the U.S.-Korea alliance and has made compromises to the U.S.

The political forces in Korea are mainly divided into conservatives and progressives, and the conservatives have a great influence on Korean politics. The Progressives, consisting of a new generation of intellectuals and elites, are more supportive of revolutionizing Korea's plutocratic monopoly model, breaking away from U.S. control, and pursuing diplomatic autonomy. Conservatives support following the U.S. strategy, strengthening the U.S.-Korea alliance, being tough on North Korea, and relying on the U.S. to maintain South Korea's national security. Although a new generation of Korean political elites is beginning to play a greater role, the role of the old conservative forces cannot be ignored and even remains dominant, leading to the outcome of Korea's struggle for autonomy.

Thus, the combination of factors at the international and domestic levels eventually led to differences in the diplomatic strategies and policies of the Philippines and South Korea in the struggle for autonomy, and therefore in the results of the struggle for autonomy, with the Philippines being able to achieve better results.

4. The Path of Struggle for Autonomy in Weak States

In asymmetric alliances, the role of weak states is sometimes overlooked, and international politics based on national power reveals the truth that "there is no diplomacy for weak states". Weak states will always have a limited diplomatic role to play. Whether, based on certain conditions, weak states can use the limited space to expand their autonomy, is precisely the subject of this paper.

Weak states must have certain conditions if they want to achieve effective results in the struggle for autonomy. This paper argues that the struggle is based on a high level of sovereign security and the possession of a certain level of power. National sovereign security is an important measure for a country to define its foreign strategy. When the sovereignty is more secure, the autonomy struggle will be more likely to be optimistic. National strength includes both hard and soft power. When a country has a certain level of power, it is more capable of implementing the strategies it wants and

of making other countries accept its demands. Thus sovereign security and national strength are the key foundations of the struggle for the autonomy of weak states.

If the goal of gaining autonomy in asymmetrical relations is to be achieved, certain conditions need to be considered, and these conditions will be related to the factors mentioned above.

4.1. External Dimension Conditions

Influencing factors at the international level include strategic dependency and benefit, which can also reflect some conditions for the struggle.

When the degree of strategic dependence is high, the weak state has a high degree of demand for the alliance and the dominant state has a high demand for that state. The autonomy struggle is not effective. Conversely, the outcome of the autonomy struggle will be more positive when the level of strategic dependence is low. Second, when the degree of benefit bundling is high, weak and dominant states have a high level of demand for each other. The autonomy struggle is not optimistic. Conversely, when the degree of benefit bundling is low, the outcome will be more optimistic. Third, when the amount of benefit acquisition is high, weak and dominant countries are needier of each other. The struggle is not optimistic. Conversely, when the amount of benefit is low, the struggle will be more optimistic.

Thus, for a weak state for maximum autonomy, it needs to make at least one of the three points above to a lesser degree, at least at the international level. Therefore, the weaker states can adjust their strategic priorities and make carefully consideration of whether to follow the strategic priorities of the dominant countries in light of their national conditions. Weak states can also adjust to the degree of bundling of interests, possibly by spreading out the objects of interest bundling, developing multilateral diplomacy, and realizing multi-level interest cooperation. The reduction of the degree of interest bundling can to some extent affect the interest acquisition, and thus promote the progress of the struggle.

4.2. Internal Dimension Conditions

Domestic-level influencing factors include the degree of sovereign security and political preferences, which places demands on the domestic situation, with the former serving as the basis for the autonomy struggle and the latter serving as the conditions for struggle.

The outcome of the struggle for autonomy will be influenced by whether political elites and interest groups are pro- or anti-alliance, whether they support a coordinated struggle based on the U.S. alliance, or a struggle to reject the U.S. alliance. If its attributes are pro-alliance, the outcome of the struggle may not be as desired, and conversely, the anti-alliance tendency may be more supportive of the autonomy struggle. If its struggle is a coordinated struggle based on the U.S. alliance, the outcome of the struggle is more likely to be realized; conversely, if it is a self-sustaining struggle, that weak state may be considered untrustworthy and its autonomy struggle will not be tolerated [25]. Thus, weak states need to focus on the tendencies of domestic political groups. It is necessary not only to obtain relative domestic support but also to keep domestic tendencies within a range that is both acceptable to the dominant allied country and consistent with the direction of struggle so that the autonomy struggle of the weak states will have domestic conditions that will contribute to the development of their struggle.

Therefore, in the struggle for autonomy, weak states need to have a certain basis for a struggle, namely sovereignty security, and national strength. They also need to consider what conditions can enable them to gain more autonomy. They need to consider both external and internal conditions, such as strategic focus, the object of interest bundling, as well as domestic political groups, and take

into account the background of the times and the state situation to find a reasonable way for the struggle for autonomy.

5. Conclusions

The Philippines and South Korea, both asymmetric allies of the United States in the Asia-Pacific region, have a growing need for diplomatic autonomy, but their struggles for autonomy have shown different results. The Philippines gained more autonomy, while South Korea's struggle for autonomy did not turn out as well as it should have. This study explores the main factors influencing this difference in outcomes through case comparisons and obtains relevant factors, including strategic dependence, degree of interest bundling and access, degree of sovereign security, and domestic political preferences. These factors play a greater role in influencing the outcome of the struggle for autonomy.

Therefore, if a weak state wants to gain as much diplomatic autonomy as possible in the struggle for autonomy in asymmetrical relations, it needs to have a certain basis, that is, sovereign security and national strength. After having a certain foundation, it is still necessary to consider what conditions can make weak countries gain as much autonomy as possible. It is necessary to consider both external and internal conditions, such as strategic priorities, the object of interest bundling, as well as domestic political groups, and take into account the background of the times and the country to come up with a reasonable path of struggle for autonomy.

This study mainly enriches the studies related to the autonomy struggle path of weak states and provides more evidence of the dynamics of weak states under asymmetric alliances. However, the description of the dominant country's choice of weak allies in this paper is rather brief, and the dominant country's choice of weak allies will also be influenced by multiple factors. Moreover, the relevant systematic theoretical framework on the factors that influence the outcome of autonomy struggles has not been fully constructed. Future research will further polish the explanatory framework and expand the spatial and temporal segments of the case analysis, and analyze different asymmetric alliance cases to obtain more scientifically valid and applicable conclusions.

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