

Exploring the Development of Inter-State Relations under the Mechanism of the Hirschman Effect: A Case Study of Malaysia-China Relations in a Political Crisis (2020-2022)

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Abstract : In general, interstate relations are diverse and include economic, political, military, and diplomatic. Therefore, by analyzing the development of the relationship between Malaysia and China, we can better verify how the Hirschman effect works between small countries and great powers. This paper mainly adopts qualitative research methods and uses Malaysia's 2020-2022 political crisis as a specific case to verify the practice of the Hirschman effect between small and large countries. In particular, the interest groups in small countries that are closely related to trade with extraordinary abilities, as the primary beneficiaries in the development of trade between the two countries, although they may use their resources to a certain extent to influence the decisions of small countries towards great powers, they do not fundamentally determine the small countries' response to large countries. In this process, the relative power asymmetry between states plays a dominant role, as small states lack trust and suspicion in political diplomacy towards large states based on the perception of threat arising from the relative power asymmetry. When developing bilateral relations with large countries, small states seek practical cooperation to promote economic and trade development but become more cautious in their political ties to avoid being caught in power struggles between large states or being controlled by them. The case of Malaysia-China relations also illustrates that despite the ongoing political crisis in Malaysia, which saw the country go through the transition from (Perikatan Nasional) PN to (Barisan Nasional) BN, different governments have maintained a pragmatic and proactive economic policy towards China to reduce suspicion and mistrust between the two countries in political and diplomatic affairs, thereby enhancing cooperation and interactions between the two countries. At the same time, the Malaysian government is developing multi-dimensional foreign relations and actively participating in multilateral, regional organizations and platforms, such as those organized by the United States, to maintain a relative balance in the influence of the US and China on Malaysia.

Keywords : Hirschman effect, interest groups, Malaysia, China, bilateral relations

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