

## **Transcending Hegemonic International Relations Theorization: Nothingness, Re-Worlding, and Balance of Relationship**

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### **Abstract**

*The manuscript compares the World History Standpoint promoted by the Kyoto School of Philosophy with two other competitors – post-Western re-worlding and the Chinese balance of relationships - in their shared campaign for alternative international relations theory. The World History Standpoint explains how nations influenced by major power politics judge their conditions and rely on combining existing cultural resources to make sense of their place in world politics. It predicts that international systemic stability cannot be maintained over a set of congruent identities because history's longevity allows for previous politically incorrect identities to return in due time with proper clues. It specifically predicts that nations caught between different identities will experience cycles in their international relations; nations with an expansive scope of international relations or declining from the hegemonic status will adopt balance of relationships; and less influential nations will practically reinterpret hegemonic order to meet their otherwise inexpressible motivations. Accordingly, Japan will be focused upon as an exemplary case for World History Standpoint; Taiwan for re-worlding; and China for balance of relationships. The paper touches upon theoretical implications of their conflicts.*

**Keywords:** The Kyoto School of Philosophy, place of nothingness, Japan, China, Taiwan, balance of relationship

### **1. Introduction**

The Kyoto School of Philosophy (KSP), which originated in Taisho, Japan (1912 - 1926) and obtained its name during the early Showa period (1926 - 1989), has received atavistic attention in the past two decades. While the KSP originated in Taisho Japan between 1912 and 1926, it obtained its name only during the Showa period, which went from 1926 to 1989. The founding father of the KSP was Nishida Kitaro, a philosopher who specifically stimulated curiosity on new possibilities of arranging alternative international relations for the 21st century primarily through his so-called Philosophy of Place (PoP). Nishida sought to overcome the Europeanization and Americanization of the world prior to World War II (WWII) through developing cultural sensitivity and anti-hegemonic thought. As such, the Kyoto School meets the current normative call for multiple voices in contemporary studies of international relations. Even though most revisits to Nishida exclusively perceive the

PoP as a normative theory on improving world politics,<sup>1</sup> Nishida himself was explicit about his ontological appeal to pure experience. Together with his epistemological quest for universality, the two indicate a potential for scientific inquiry. Therefore, the literature owes him a scientific, rather than a normative, appreciation.

Other theoretical attempts to counter the perceived hegemony of Anglo-Saxon International Relations Theory (IRT) are typically both scientific and normative. An example of this is the emerging trend of re-Worlding subaltern subjectivities. This takes place through demonstrating that actual world politics differs from the understanding presented in mainstream IR literature.<sup>2</sup> Scholarships on re-/Worlding thus explore normative versus actual world politics. Reflecting on the widely shared perception of China as a rising country, an additional nascent struggle against the mainstream arises from the anxious efforts to establish a Chinese School of IR.<sup>3</sup> IR scholars propagating the Chinese School draw from Chinese cultural resources in an attempt to present a different ideal view of world politics.<sup>4</sup> Scientific endeavors to explain the different manners of interaction of nation states in comparison with those explained in mainstream IRT, such as the practices of mutual relationships, can potentially lead to a Chinese perspective with universal implications.<sup>5</sup> In brief, the current normative challenges to mainstream IRT typically offer scientific explanations of world politics, which render the revisit of Nishida incomplete without the simultaneous exploration of scientific implications of the PoP.

The succeeding discussion compares Nishida with two other competitors, namely, post-Western re-Worlding and the Chinese balance of relationships, (BoR) in their shared campaign for alternative IRTs, and does this within the epistemological frame provided by Nishida. For convenience, the country of historical practice for each alternative IRT is used to illustrate the plausibility of different IR theorizations. Accordingly, Japan provides a suitable example for PoP, Taiwan for re-Worlding, and China for the BoR. The remainder of the paper argues that the three alternatives complement each other within Nishida's epistemological scheme and are illustrative of universal IRT of East Asian origin. In addition, the article particularly focuses on the scientific principles derived from PoP.

## 2. Three Anti-Hegemonic Attempts

The concept of "hegemonic IR" is used to refer to the nature of world politics as it is explained by a dominant single discourse. The current hegemonic view of the nature of world politics is that it is essentially state-centric, that it is undergirded by one superpower and other major powers, mainly the US and western European countries, and that the interaction in between the states consists either of peace or war. The current hegemonic IR contradicts with and transforms non-western world orders elsewhere, including the relevant cases of

<sup>1</sup> Bret Davis, Brian Schroeder, and Jason M. Wirth, *Japanese Continental Philosophy: Conversations with the Kyoto School* (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 2011); Robert Wilkinson, *Nishida and Western Philosophy* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2009); Christopher Goto-Jones, *Re-Politicising the Kyoto School as Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Arlene Tickner and David L. Blaney, *Thinking International Relations Differently* (London: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Nele Noesselt, "Is There a 'Chinese School' of IR?" (Working Paper no. 188, GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Hamburg, March 2012); Hung-jen Wang, *The Rise of China and Chinese International Relations (IR) Scholarship* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> Lily H.M. Ling, *The Dao of World Politics: Toward Post-Westphalian, Worldlist International Relations* (Oxon: Routledge, 2014); Tingyang Zhao, "A Political World Philosophy in Terms of All-under-heaven (Tian-xia)," *Diogenes* 221 (2009): 5-18.

<sup>5</sup> Yaqing Qin, "Guanxi Benwei yu Guocheng Jianguo: Jiang Zhongguo Linian Zhiru Guoji Guanxi Lilun" [Relationality and processual construction: bring Chinese ideas into IRT], *Social Sciences in China* 3 (2009): 69-86; Xuetong Yan, *Ancient Chinese Thought and Modern Chinese Power*, ed. Daniel Belland Zhe Sun, trans. Edmund Ryden (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

Japan, Taiwan, and China, resulting in ambivalence toward their pasts. The PoP provides epistemological clarity on the identity puzzle of Japan and of other nations with a similar problem. It does so through providing the possibility of a nation to represent both East and West at the same time, leading to a non-western, non-territorial, or non-centrist position, though homed arguably exclusively by Japan in practice. The puzzle emphasizes the aim of Japan for normalcy of in-betweenness,<sup>6</sup> which is a statement of alienation from hegemonic IR.

In contrast to hegemonic IR, Nishida perceived the idea of universalism as one of becoming others. Universalism according to the Nishida is constantly enhanced through accommodating or acquiring additional thoughts and identities into one's own self-imagination. It sees conversion and synthesis as a bridge between civilizations as redundant, if not harmful.<sup>7</sup> Whereas Western modernity demonstrates a strong need to convert others from a differing trajectory to a common, that is, universal, destiny, the KSP exhibits a strong need for self-conversion. Western modernity, regardless of being prolonged at any given time, is adopted and integrated in the permanent collection through self-conversion while the process of Japan's universalism increased. Compared to Japan, Turkey, which is likewise in between almost all the dichotomized perspectives, could be another certain, albeit involuntary, site of world history. Nevertheless, the deliberate, abrupt, massive, and yet thorough learning and simulating required of Japanese consciousness by PoP presumably empowers Japan exclusively into world history. Under such a self-concept, Japan remains as the sole nation that is capable of constantly becoming others, through entering and withdrawing in accordance with the current identity's success or failure, to eventually encompass all. In fact, the Pacific War that the Japanese military launched against the US proceeded exactly in the name of the universalist "World History Standpoint (WHS)", with the aim of exposing the partial nature of Western modernity. The mission provided by the WHS was allegedly "to overcome modernity". This mission was not to deny modernity in its entirety, but to transcend the provinciality of western modernity. The other side of the coin was to modernize the rest of "the Greater East Asia Sphere", which the Japanese military considered as the entirety of the Japanese self. The double missions were therefore to defeat the partial West and to convert the backward portions of East Asia itself.

Accordingly, Japan's in-between place is presumably a place of nothingness or a non-place where Nishida wished that differing nations could meet without mutual naming or judgment. Idealistically, Japan exemplifies a civilizational origin and bridge that enables the East to meet the West and vice versa. The assumption of the WHS is that neither the East nor the West should expand or conquer the other. Their commonality must not lie in teleological historiography because preservation of their difference is the spirit that guarantees their inclusion in a universal world, resulting in the multi-directionality of the WHS. The multi-directionality of the WHS implies the coexistence of East and West while they each flourish on their own conditions. To be able to move in between the two requires one to go deeper

<sup>6</sup> Kosuke Shimizu, "Materializing the 'non-Western': Two Stories of Japanese Philosophers on Culture and Politics in the Inter-War Period," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 28, no. 1 (2014): 1-18, doi: 10.1080/09557571.2014.889083; Josuke Ikeda, "Japanese Vision of International Society: A Historical Exploration," in *Is There A Japanese IR? Seeking an Academic Bridge through Japan's History of International Relations*, ed. Kosuke Shimizu, et al. (Ryukoku: Afrasian Centre for Peace and Development Studies, Ryukoku University, 2008), 5-28.

<sup>7</sup> Kosuke Shimizu, "Nishida Kitaro and Japan's Interwar Foreign Policy: War Involvement and Culturalist Political Discourse" (Working Paper Series 44, Arasian Centre for Peace and Development Studies, Kyoto, 2009).

than merely being conscious of their differences. This leads one to the place of nothingness. The WHS therefore does not propagate the same self-other concept as the one mentioned in the literature on identity.<sup>8</sup> According to the WHS, both the self and its others are non-synthesized identities that are to be gathered in an ultimate being in nothingness without substituting one another.<sup>9</sup> The formulation of the WHS, as a container of all possibilities in the past, present and future, can thus easily be connected with the imagined origin of the universe and is therefore practically coupled with Japanese Shinto, which likewise provides a metaphor of the origin and the evolution of Japan that is presumably all encompassing.

The difficulty that Japan encountered with the “backward” East Asia, particularly China, was its perceived incapacity for effective learning. From the past dynastic China to Communist China and then to the rise of capitalist China, the Chinese people have always practically accepted the co-existence of Western values, identities, and institutions in their political life. However, China has suffered (or perhaps enjoyed) false, insincere, and incompatible learning. For the Japanese, this suggests China’s incapacity for true learning. According to the classic Japanese explanation,<sup>10</sup> which remains popular after the still ongoing reforms in China, China’s over-reliance on rituals to harmonize relationships with superior invaders has hindered the country from achieving authentic modernity. In this formulation, even though China appears to have the capability to accommodate differing values and identities by ritually relating them, China, however, does not learn at a level deeper than the instrumental use of the alien civilization. Therefore, according to the classic Japanese explanation, despite China’s similar capability to facilitate the coexistence of Western modernity and Chinese culture, the Chinese claim to universality is nominal, spurious, and lacks curiosity. As a result, Chinese learning is at best partial and eventually reduced to the harmonizing and stabilization of a relationship, which makes China, in the WHS perspective, unable to resist the West or engage in serious reform by itself.

To become more genuinely universal, Japan executes both entry into and withdrawal from any provincial identities that are not to be synthesized. Japan should exemplify for the West and East Asia the process of withdrawing from the site of their existential experiences to exercise re-entry elsewhere. One has to consider “place” as a metaphor of identity, along with the notion of “site” that is adopted in the post-Western literature. For Japan, in contrast to Western modernity, the exercise of withdrawing from a specific “place” to a “no place” allows the imagination of freedom from either one’s own past or Western modernity. This withdrawal, called self-denial, also allows further imagination of re-entry from nothingness into many potentially differing sites, including that of the intruder. Therefore, the metaphor of nothingness exclusively provides Japan with the capability to see the limitation of all sites, including the alleged hegemony and all strings of universalism, achieving the emergence of a world history that accommodates and transcends all sites.

Framing Western modernity, East Asian resistance, and Chinese management of relationships, along with Japan’s WHS, PoP categorizes “place” into four different types.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> William Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> Chih-yu Shih and Josuke Ikeda, “International Relations of Post-hybridity: Dangers and Potentials in Non-synthetic Cycles,” *Globalizations* 13, no. 4 (2016): 454-68.

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Tanaka, *Japan’s Orient: Rendering the Past into the Future* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>11</sup> Yu-kwan Ng, “Juedui wu yu zhexue guannian de dianfan” [Absolute nothingness and the paradigms of philosophical concepts], *Zhengguan* 56 (2011): 5-28; Wen-hong Huang, “Xitian jiduolang changsuo luoji de neizai zhuanxiang” [The internal turn in Nishida Kitaro’s logic of place], *National Chengchi University Journal* 23 (2010): 1-31.

First, a place of being/identity is an absolute place trapped in false rationalism and universalism, such as Western modernity. This place constitutes contemporary hegemonic thought. Second, a place of relative being/identity is a relative place that resists hegemony. Examples are the East Asian quests for indigenous identities in Taiwan, Korea, Vietnam, and so on. This is where post-Western re-Worlding belongs. A typical formulation of relative being/identity is postcolonial hybridity. Imagined nationalities, as well as aboriginality, are stronger versions of a relative identity. Third, a place of relative nothingness is a transcendental place that connects or permeates absolute places as well as relative places, such as the Chinese scheme of relating to each other in specific contexts, which includes the BoR. One example is Chinese Confucianism, while another can be non-alignment thought by Jawaharlal Nehru. Finally, a place of absolute nothingness is where time and space meet to render the other three places thinkable and seeable. Cultivating an archetypal subjectivity to transcend any mundane conditions, the WHS demonstrates this perspective. Below, the second, third, and last places are explained in more detail.

*Relative Identity:* The place of relative identity uses the non-Western or post-Western IR concept of “worldliness”. Creating worldliness in a site is done through essentially “Worlding” it. In the past, Worlding was a geo-cultural project of global capitalism/hegemony to monopolize meanings.<sup>12</sup> Resisting this project is known as re-Worlding, a form of self-Worlding that emerges from a supposedly subaltern site for and by the self. Re-Worlding is a discursive reclaim of the lost soul by excavating, retrieving, reviving, and rejuvenating a narrative of the past. Sited re-Worlding results in a declaration that hegemonic power cannot monopolize either ontological or epistemological resources and critically assesses any hegemonic attempt to reproduce dominance over subalterns. Sited re-Worlding resists, undermines, or revises a hegemonic division of work through uncontrollable fluidity caused by the incongruent schemata of the subalterns, their ideological inconsistency, opportunism, self-denial, and self-assertion.<sup>13</sup>

The methods of re-Worlding must be multiplied and improvised on as they recast memories of various forms. Through re-Worlding testimonies to differences are achieved, which are aimed at thinking back on hegemonic arrangements of lives at subaltern sites as well as writing back to provincialize hegemonic order. In other words, re-Worlding incurs site-centric methodology and aims at cultivating a counter perspective in the face of an overwhelming hegemony. In particular, re-Worlding seeks to identify alternatives for thinking about the “international” that are more in tune with local concerns and traditions outside the West.<sup>14</sup> In this view, victimized people can reincarnate by looking back through an imagined subjectivity belonging exclusively to a particular site, which is not subject to false universalism.

*Relative Nothingness:* The place of relative nothingness also has a parallel in the nascent IR literature, that is, in the Chinese School. A number of Chinese schools invest in Chinese cultural resources that formulate general theories of IR; hence, Daoism, Confucianism, and

<sup>12</sup> Jan Jindy Pettman, *Worlding Women: A Feminist International Politics* (London: Routledge, 1996); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Three Women’s Texts and A Critique of Imperialism,” *Critique Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (1985): 243-61.

<sup>13</sup> Pinar Bilgin, “Thinking Past ‘Western’ IR?” *Third World Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (2008): 5-23; Albert J. Paolini, Anthony Elliott, and Anthony Moran. *Navigating Modernity: Postcolonialism, Identity, and International Relations* (Boulder, US: Lynne Rienner, 1999).

<sup>14</sup> Pinar Bilgin, *The International in Security, Security in the International* (Oxon: Routledge, 2016); Ling, *The Dao of World Politics*; Arlene Tickner and Ole Waever, *International Relations Scholarship Around the World* (London: Routledge, 2009).

Legalism are employed to examine the coexistence of differences,<sup>15</sup> relational reciprocity,<sup>16</sup> and hierarchical stability<sup>17</sup>. Together, they indicate a shared longing for an order that can transcend the self-interests of individual nations. As a result, the quest for a relational order subscribes to no specific institution or value. Examples can be found in the arrangements between the Chinese dynastic court and its neighbors or between the late Qing court and various imperial powers, which were flexibly designed to meet the differing conditions of each tributary state or imperialist power.<sup>18</sup> Aside from the distinctiveness of each bilateral relationship, the rules that have governed China over the generations are hardly ever the same. Thus, the Chinese consider an imagined cycle of “governability” (*zhi*) and “chaos” (*luan*) as typical. Indeed, it is so typical that it is still officially narrated in the present.<sup>19</sup> If the spontaneity of cycles discontinues because of rationalist intervention, governability will lose its trajectory and may never resume, leaving brutal force as the only viable solution to anarchy. Therefore, the BoR in general, as well as in China in specific, pragmatically and patiently adopts a laissez-faire approach in handling the domestic chaos of a partner country.

According to the aforementioned Japanese criticism of the Chinese over-reliance on ritual and relationship, Chinese intellectual history is not particularly keen on the adoption of Western institutions or values. Chinese international relationships are therefore highly independent from values or institutional considerations. Chinese international relationship is likewise not particularly strong in ensuring defense against invaders. Both local gentries and the dynastic courts look for ways to coexist with invading powers. Achieving a balanced relationship is the quintessential philosophy of life that seeks to transcend the power difference by establishing reciprocal relationships. Specifically, BoR is the process of reciprocating in order to reproduce relationality that constitutes the actors. To maintain a balanced relationship, China should yield to the other side as long as the challenge to the existing relationship is not judged as malicious. By yielding, China exhibits sincerity toward the relationship. In addition, China must resist vehemently if the violation is anticipated to be detrimental to a long-term relationship, despite China’s relative weakness in power. This resistance shows China’s determination to restore the correct relationship.<sup>20</sup> These two principles of a balanced relationship, namely, yielding and resistance to the perceived degree of challenge to a relationship, are essentially subversive to hegemonic IR that is founded on the concepts of power, interest, and value. From the WHS perspective though, both principles are inconsequential.

According to the BoR, both domestic cycles and the balance of power are dispensable considerations. Any multilateral arrangement to channel intervention or universal values to transform a so-called failing state would be redundant. If IR can be reduced to a combination of bilateral relations, other universal learning is no longer necessary both because the order is already existent in the process of reciprocating and because, after all, the source of good governance introduced at present may become the source of chaos in the next cycle and vice

<sup>15</sup> Zhao, “A Political World Philosophy,” 5-18.

<sup>16</sup> Qin, “Guanxi Benwei,” 69-86.

<sup>17</sup> Yan, *Ancient Chinese Thought*.

<sup>18</sup> Minshu Liao, “Qingdai zhongguo de waizheng zhisu” [Diplomatic order of Qing China], in *Jindai zhongguo: wenhua yu waijiao* [Modern China: culture and diplomacy], ed. Luan Jing He (Beijing: Social Science Literature Press, 2012), 130-53.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Zeming Jiang, “Gaodu zhongshi zhonghua minzu fazhan shi” [Highly stress Chinese national history of development], in *Jianming zhongguo lishi duben* [Easy readers for Chinese history] (Beijing: Chinese Social Science Press, 2012).

<sup>20</sup> Chia-ning Huang and Chih-yu Shih, “China’s Quest for Grand Strategy: Power, National Interest, or Relational Security?” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 8, no. 1 (2014): 1-26.

versa. What would be the excitement of forcing a conversion in a subaltern site when one knows that nothing will remain the same in the long run? Anything that fades at the present can return to consciousness given the right cue, which leads to a situation where, ultimately, only reciprocal relationships are practical and stable.<sup>21</sup> If China cultivates positive long-term relationships, others will presumably reciprocate. Values and ideologies become dispensable once the relationship is stabilized, and domestic problems are subsequently not the duty of others to resolve. When given sufficient time, solutions can be obtained domestically. Patience, instead of forced transformation, is the main characteristic of the BoR in Chinese IRT and is known as the “Great Way” in Chinese discourse, upon which all strangers supposedly walk together harmoniously alongside the self-cultivating prince.<sup>22</sup>

*Absolute Nothingness:* According to a KSP scholar, under the condition of nothingness, transcendence replaces resistance.<sup>23</sup> The place of absolute nothingness is composed of pure experience, according to Nishida, prior to any acquisition of meaning. All of the encounters in the past, as well as those in the future co-exist in nothingness where one transcends one’s sited limitations. The place of absolute nothingness calms all conflicts, with or without justice. It contains all possibilities before they acquire any meaning, but they guarantee no single result or success. The lack of duty is even greater than in the place of relative nothingness because, while relative nothingness cultivates a small sense of duty toward a related other, one can do without the sense of duty toward one’s own life and or that of others in insensible and insensitive nothingness.<sup>24</sup>

Practically, the freedom to act beyond the physical limit testifies the fearless spirit that is expected of a Japan possessing the WHS. This fearlessness manifests in self-becoming and self-disciplining on one hand and in overcoming the physical restraint imposed by the materialistic civilization of the West on the other hand. The constant self-becoming indicates the spirit of continuous self-denial required of Japan and East Asia to exercise withdrawal from one’s own limited place of relative identity. The place of absolute nothingness is most properly represented by the arrival of an international society centering on the principle of in-betweenness. To achieve this kind of international society, self-denial is the essential characteristic to show because Japan has to display to the rest of the world its transcendent capacity for being anyone else. Without extensive self-denial from its East-Asian qualities, Japan would not be able to become as good as or better than other civilizations by the standard of the latter. Thus, Japan would not be free or universal.

Each entry into a place is highly extreme in the sense that Japan endeavors to become more modern than the West or become more practiced in Sinology than China. Becoming Western or Chinese would request a withdrawal to nothingness first. Learning after entering a place does not stop until one is physically or socially exhausted and unable to reach further perfection. This quality is unavailable in the place of relative nothingness where learning is insincere and relational coupling is more important than learning. In fact, pre-WWII Japan considered itself as the best pupil of Sinology and as the genuine successor of the Chinese

<sup>21</sup> Kwang-kuo Hwang, *Foundations of Chinese Psychology: Confucian Social Relations* (New York: Springer, 2012).

<sup>22</sup> Roger Ames and David Hall, *Laoshi, Dao De Jing: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003).

<sup>23</sup> Keiji Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

<sup>24</sup> James W. Heisig and John C. Maraldo, eds., *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, and The Question of Nationalism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995); James Hubbard and Paul Swanson, eds., *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997).

culture to sustain and improve its modern fate.<sup>25</sup> Given the country’s Sinological spirit, Japan’s acquisition of modernity proceeded at a level much deeper than the materialistic civilization of the West, and provides the identity of in-betweenness that fully describes the international society.

Table 1 lists the categories of places of the PoP: 1) the place of absolute identity, 2) the place of relative identity, 3) the place of relative nothingness, and 4) the place of absolute nothingness. Synchronization should be considered to be an enactment of the place of absolute identity; synchronicity is defined as the derivative of rationalism and universalism and informs most general theories in IR. Synchronization refers to the simultaneous execution or promoted diffusion of a pattern of rational thinking embedded in an idea, an institution, a collective identity, or a perceived arrangement of material force. Synchronization is presumably a process in which unrelated national actors conjunctionally fulfill their self-assigned functions to interact rationally. Institutionally, synchronization under the hegemonic order, which requires conversion, is the exact opposite of absolute nothingness, which foregoes any duty of converting others.

Table 1- The PoP Conditions of Identity

Synchronic Multi-sited	Yes	No
Yes	World History Standpoint as Absolute nothingness	Re-Worlding as Relative identity
No	Hegemonic Order as Absolute identity	Balance of Relationships as Relative nothingness

A spatial sensibility runs through the conditions of relative identity and absolute nothingness and thus keeps the danger of being conquered as well as conquering alive. Regarding the conditions of relative identity, spatial multi-sitedness, Worldliness, place, sovereignty, agency, subjectivity, Asia, and China-centrism are popular yet estranging concepts that celebrate their sited subjectivities. These concepts defeated the WHS’s quest for nothingness before WWII, treating the role of local/national differences so seriously that their subscribers could not help but engage in expansion and colonialism.<sup>26</sup> The claim of “otherness” by a local subaltern is potentially dangerous because sited identity of this sort provides a clearly demarcated scope to carry out internal cleansing or launch external expansion, as well as invited conquest. The more clearly demarcated the site of resistance, the more strongly motivated the hegemonic power to enforce intervention.

While re-Worlding is a path for the self-perceived subaltern to reclaim subjectivity, nothingness uses self-perceived in-betweenness to transcend the false universalism of hegemony and then to reach allegedly true universalism. The epistemological caveat lies in the shared spatial anxiety of the loss of sitedness under the sensed hegemonic intrusion. The notions of “post-White” order of the WHS and the “post-Western” claim of many post-Western projects coincide with the identification of an imagined self-site. Note that WHS disciples try thawing sensibilities toward space by claiming themselves to be all-encompassing. Nevertheless, Sun Ge, a Chinese admirer of Japanese modern thoughts, traces a string of obsessive adherence to a certain inexpressible, but invincible, sense of space that is similar to a shelter or an identity.<sup>27</sup> This spatial sensibility reproduces the imagined and

<sup>25</sup> Tanaka, *Japan’s Orient*.

<sup>26</sup> David Williams, *Defending Japan’s Pacific War: The Kyoto School Philosophers and Post-White Power* (London: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>27</sup> Ge Sun, *Zhuti misan de kongjian* [The space with pervasive subjectivities] (Nanchang: Jiangxi Education Press, 2003).



re-imagined possibility of being controlled, monopolized, brainwashed, invaded, intruded, suppressed, exploited, and so on. The claim of difference in an exclusive self-ontological site would lead to the desire to overtake and transform it.<sup>28</sup> After all, only those who possess a different site can be the target of intervention.

### 3. From Normative Failures to Scientific Inquiries

If sitedness and identity are two sides of the same coin, thorough invasion of the site can only take place by annihilating the identity of the people. At these hegemonic moments, each invasion symbolizes the collection of another fresh trophy of universalism. Hence, the effort to construct sitedness embedded in its own historical, religious, and cultural trajectory may dangerously incur the label of fundamentalism. A worst case is multi-sitedness that challenges the hegemonic instinct to conquer as many as possible, while at the same time discourages united resistance because of consciously cherished differences. Therefore, the normative appeal of the re-Worlding project may practically backfire. A late veteran Sinologist thus called for a methodology in Sinology that stops the treatment of China as Japan's object of study. Instead, Sinology should be the method for Japan to withdraw from the Japanese condition and become universal.<sup>29</sup> Could nothingness, as a substitute, have any empirical relevance except its normative claim of transcendence?

Normative failures of re-Worlding can be proven or disproven by empirical research, which may contribute to the improvement of the re-Worlding project. Both re-Worlding and the BoR have scientific potentials. Re-Worlding is a method of tracing how empirical learning and practice of hegemonic role assignments in the world political economy proceed at a particular site. Simply describing the enactment of the roles and their meaning to the subaltern site is a normative challenge to the hegemonic discourse. Despite the absence of a conscious attempt or capacity to resist, the sited understanding, which is rooted in sited knowledge, suggests how hegemonic order suffers revision, and hence subversion. The literature has noted abundant examples of this kind of resistance.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, BoR can enlighten scientific research of IR by explaining how nations transcend power politics and maintain long-term, reciprocal stability. The literature on China's relationships with Southeast Asian countries provides ample examples.<sup>31</sup> The BoR does not have to be normatively preferred to be effective because it parallels the balance of power and influences IR where the balance of power is ambiguous or impossible to formulate. Also, balancing strategies alone are rarely successful.

I contend that the WHS can be scientific, similar to re-Worlding and the BoR, but a scientific mode of the WHS is rarely attempted. By generating scientifically hypothesized processes of transcendence, the WHS, along with BoR and re-Worlding, explains the capacity of a society to store suppressed or unwanted identities in a subconscious state of nothingness, which are awakened by the conditions ripened for their revival. This process also includes the capacity to acquire new perspectives in the future. The place of absolute nothingness is

<sup>28</sup> Lily H.M. Ling, *Postcolonial International Relations: Conquest and Desire between Asia and the West* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

<sup>29</sup> Yuzo Mizoguchi, *Zhongguo zuowei fangfa* [China as method], trans. Lin You-chong (Taipei: National Institute for Compilation and Translation, 1999).

<sup>30</sup> Alan Chong, "An Unfinished 'Diplomacy of Encounter': Asia and the West 1500-2015," *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 17, no. 2 (2016): 208-31; James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (Yale University Press, 1990); Tickner and Blaney, *Claiming the International*.

<sup>31</sup> Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Chiung-chiu Huang, "Balance of Relationship: Myanmar's China Policy," *Pacific Review* 28, no. 2 (2015): 189-210.

theoretically a site where all those alternatives temporarily are stored in oblivion. Amnesia is a plausible contingency in the aftermath of ideological, institutional, and identity conflicts, transforming societies of in-between civilizations into practiced adaptors to conditions—a threat of failure or an opportunity of success. As a result, no value, ideology, institution, or identity can be permanent. Cyclical and inconsistent self-understandings are the archetypical pattern in the long run in both re-Worlding and BoR research. They are able to partially predict cycles scientifically on the basis of the following three propositions:

1. The Nothingness Proposition: There is a high possibility for aborted identities to return in the future, and no identity can be permanent. International relations based on existing identities between nations are inherently unstable. This proposition is derived from the PoP ontology of the WHS that disregards space and temporality to accommodate various possibilities and to formulate a repertoire of identity strategies. Identities co-exist instead of undergoing synthesis. Identities aborted due to exhaustion of further improvements are not consciously accessible, but the thorough dominance of the current identity will eventually exhaust the country. The limit of the pursuit on the current track, once reached, will trigger the emergence of an alternative principle of IR. However, the systemic level does not determine exactly which one will return. Usually, this is determined by idiosyncratic factors such as family traditions, factional politics, and economic decline, etc. This proposition makes possible drastic turns to different IR principles by nations torn between incongruent identities. Their seeming incapacity to establish a compromise with rivaling identities is in line with their readiness for a drastic turn. Cooperation of the domestic constituency in support of such turns, once achieved, indirectly testifies the inexpressibility of absolute nothingness.

2. The Re-Worlding Proposition: Identities that can provide evaluative perspectives on dominant identities are more likely to stay or return over the course of time. International relations cannot proceed with one dominant identity in the long run. Derived from the re-Worlding epistemology, the re-Worlding proposition suggests that the recollection of an identity from the subconscious condition has a better chance as long as the present hegemonic circumstance can be critically assessed. This proposition is particularly germane to weak nations engrossed in an encountered hegemonic influence. Such nations reify the condition of relative identity by excavating and appropriating cultural resources not currently in use. The PoP epistemologically explains the possibility of these nations to resort to memories or utopia's not shared by the encountered hegemony.

3. The BoR Proposition: To the extent that role-identity is contingent upon the context, identity switching would be easy and the synchronic rules of international society would be difficult to prevail. This proposition is derived from the BoR epistemology, which argues that nations live together more easily if they can settle on a way that disregards their differences in identities or values. Therefore, all cultural resources should be ready any time to comfort a particular target. Conscious transcendence over encountered differences reifies the condition of relative nothingness. The balance of relationships can be more likely attained by bilateral rather than multi-lateral negotiations. As a result, relative nothingness is particularly germane to nations that face an extensive and expanding scope of encounter that disallows enforcement of any synchronized value or institution. Likewise, a declining hegemony should engage in relative nothingness by jettisoning the extant synchronic values to appease allies. The condition of relative nothingness is illustrated by countries consciously avoiding specific positions in a multi-lateral setting or relying on different identity strategies in a variety of bilateral settings.

## 4. An Empirical PoP Pertaining to Senkaku/Diaoyu/Diaoyutai Islands

### 4.1. The three cases and the three propositions

The case of Senkaku/Diaoyu/Diaoyutai Islands illustrates the empirical relevance of the Philosophy of Place. In this case, hegemonic order may appear inapplicable because hegemonic power is ambivalent. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, for example, with the US refusing to take a clear and consistent stand, all anti-hegemonic schemes in East Asia are competing over the Senkaku/Diaoyu/Diaoyutai Islands. The sources of confrontation and their resolutions emerge from both the implicit and powerful pressure of hegemony in synchronizing the mutually excluding sovereign order and the in/capacity to improvise of all the three nations. The dispute occurred between Japan, Taiwan, and China. Provided that they conform to the sovereign order, the three countries may not meet a resolution because the disputed island is intrinsic to their individual claim of sitedness. If they stick with the principle of nothingness, a resolution may eventually emerge under some version of Asianism, but may also disintegrate in the following cycle. Under the BoR, peace could be obtained through rituals allowing all to pretend ownership or war, but such pretentious rituals should be restored first. Each contender historically used a particular discursive weapon. Japan derived the WHS from the PoP. Taiwan applied the double-re-Worlding scheme. China adopted the balance of relationship. Nevertheless, these schemes were performed in cycles.

The scientists adhering to the PoP can specifically predict policy predisposition that has systemic consequences. In the first place, none of the three schemes is a direct respondent to power politics, nor to immediate or apparent national interest considerations. Rather, each scheme involves a cyclical drive to obtain the in-betweenness caused by co-existing yet non-synthesized identities. Japan's return to the WHS Asianism, after experiencing exhaustion at having been the pupil of the West since 1950, shows the country's indifference toward Chinese values or feelings and cultivates a degree of readiness to move beyond the US occupation. Meanwhile, Taiwan's return to postcolonial aversion to China tolerates Japan's nationalization of the Diaoyutai, thus achieving Taiwan's independence from China, with the support of the postcolonial identity left by its former colonizer Japan. China's return to an ambiguous, pre-modern condition of sovereignty that relies on the ritual of joint venture or on a deliberately ambiguous rhetoric stabilizes bilateral relationships in a preferable state of no solution. According to the three propositions, Japan's return is irrevocable until it is completely exhausted. Taiwan's return is bifurcated into anti-China and pro-China. China's return is to deliberately avoid positioning.

The place of absolute nothingness is expected to provide endless retrieval, recombination, and creativity that ensure the unstable nature of IR for any self-searching country caught between incongruent identities, such as Japan. Being positioned on the territorial dispute reveals the impossibility of being simultaneously Western, Asian, and Japanese. Once submerged in a particular identity, the nothingness proposition predicts that Japan will not yield until the continuation is no longer feasible physically (i.e. economically or militarily), and then yield quickly and thoroughly.

The place of relative identity remains based on the epistemological necessity of re-Worlding by a self-perceived subaltern nation in a rediscovered site, such as Taiwan. The desire for re-Worlding, in opposition to the hegemonic conquest, exposes Taiwan's multiple subaltern positions regarding China, the US, and Japan, only to bring forth the impossibility

of self-becoming. In contrast to seeking independence from China, Taiwan cannot refuse any form of coalition with the hegemonic US. This coalition further leads to the inevitability of Taiwan allowing Japan's unilateral nationalization of the disputed island. The re-Worlding proposition predicts that Taiwan will alternate between the three candidates of hegemony existing in its layered history as the target of resistance.

The place of relative nothingness mediates relative identity and absolute nothingness for a country experiencing a decline such as the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Qing court or a rise such as the early 21<sup>st</sup> century China. The resulting undecidable roles for China to play pragmatically dissuade, accommodate, or urge its emerging identity to engage in various kinds of relationships. Territorial interests are inessential for China in stabilizing relationships under a changing international relations framework. A stabilized relationship should nevertheless include sovereign integrity if the opponent intends to deny China's. The BoR proposition predicts that the Chinese pursuit of harmony and peaceful coexistence would be satisfied by Japan's acknowledgement of the existence of a dispute and not by Chinese exclusive ownership of the disputed island. However, ambiguity is preferred to clarity in this case where a mutually agreed proper relationship is unlikely.

#### 4.2. Japan and the nothingness principle

The Japanese modern history has been full of cycles. Each cycle has appeared irrevocable in the beginning. Consistently, the cycles were aborted upon the forced realization of exhaustion, but replaced with another seemingly irrevocable agenda. The key question is on the manner of coping with Japan's Asian identity. Asia has alternatively exhibited its backward otherness under modernity, the base of world revolution under socialism, its backward self under the WHS, and a method of self-becoming under the pressure of modernity. The disciples of each theme always appear uncompromising but their causes necessarily come and go relative to whether the physical conditions of their continuous pursuit are obtainable or expiring. The complete involvement in a particular version of Asianism and the sudden subsequent switch strike the prototype of the nothingness proposition.

Aborted pre-WWII ideas of Asianism have returned to contemporary Japanese IR thinking in various versions. East Asia once had a crystal notion in support of Japan's quest for worldliness before the war. As the place of absolute nothingness, Asia inspired a philosophy looking to overcome the compulsive Western modernity or the inevitable Asian backwardness. This perceived superior Western modernity returned after WWII with the arrival of American occupation forces in Japan. In addition, the image of a backward Asia lingered on in China's estranging socialist identity. For some time, the Fukuzawa solution of "Leaving Asia, Joining Europe", which was rendered politically incorrect by the Pacific War, reappeared, overshadowing Asianism. The literature has noted various other interpretations of Japan's proper identity, such as liberal democracy, peacemaker, profitmaker, and development aider, which have arisen alongside nascent Asianism.<sup>32</sup> In the aftermath of the Maoist Cultural Revolution in China, the silenced socialist and left-wing perspectives during the war once again lost their appeal, despite being revived in academic circles after the war.

<sup>32</sup> Guizhi Li, *Jindia riben de dong yang gai nian: yi zhongguo yu ou mei wei jingwei* [The concept of toyo in modern Japan: the two dimensions of China and Euro-America] (Taipei: The Research and Educational Center for China Studies and Cross Taiwan-Strait Relations, National Taiwan University, 2008); Chia-ning Huang and Chih-yu Shih, *No Longer Oriental: Self and European Characteristics in Japan's Views on China* (Taipei: The Research and Educational Center for China Studies and Cross Taiwan-Strait Relations, National Taiwan University, 2009).

Each politically incorrect view had its turn in history and waited for another opportunity after being silenced by conditions. Cycles of political (in)correctness, which are frequent in subaltern societies,<sup>33</sup> attest to the place of absolute nothingness as a depot of subconscious identities. The message for any hegemonic discourse of the time is that non-synthetic identities can never be quelled at the subconscious level.

The left wing yielded to suppressive authorities during the early Showa period, thus socialism was politically silenced. A significant portion of the left-wing supporters left Japan but their spirit remained in the remote but hopeful land of Manchukuo, the origin of civilization for Shiratori Kurakichi (1865 to 1942), a Shinto absolutist who founded the Tokyo School of Sinology. Manchukuo was tantamount to the place of nothingness in Shiratori's narrative,<sup>34</sup> being the common root of all civilizations, and was designed as the princely land of all nationalities. Therefore, Manchukuo is a reification of the place of absolute nothingness.<sup>35</sup> Socialist intellectuals, after "giving in" their political correctness to Shinto under the Fascist condition, gathered at the Research Department of the Southern Manchurian Railway Company and embedded a left discourse in their class-related research on land property and conventions of village life in Northern China. Living under imperialism disallowed socialist intellectuals to engage in conscious politics of the subaltern. However, their anti-imperialist activism resumed atavistically after the American occupying troops liberated them from political incorrectness, which culminated in the 1960 mass demonstration against Japan's signing of the Security Pact with the U.S. The views of these intellectuals on Socialist China were sanguine and hopeful, but the end of the Cultural Revolution silenced them again. While their place has always been opposite of that of the right wing, both left- and right-wing supporters share a career style of vicissitudes.<sup>36</sup>

The same career style has a wider scope of practice than Japan. A parallel vicissitude submerges Euro-Asianism in Russia, which first appeared in the 1920s and then acquiesced under the Communist Party rule for 70 years before finally re-emerging in the 1990s to assist in the pursuit of an integrated statehood of Russia.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, the pursuit of statehood in 21<sup>st</sup> century Japan by the right wing, as supported by Premier Abe, was an attempt to move Japan beyond being an occupied territory of the U.S. or the West.<sup>38</sup> To embark on a journey toward statehood, Japan cannot directly challenge U.S. leadership but must instead demonstrate its ability to face and overcome the rising China that disturbed the hegemonic order under the leadership of the U.S. As the U.S. fails to provide a civilizational model for neighboring China to emulate, a normalized Japan that is no longer under the U.S. protective umbrella would make a contemporary pledge to the WHS.

The nationalization of the Senkaku Islands of Japan in 2012 and the demonstration of Japanese military strength against China from 2013 onward have won the support of the Japanese general public, particularly the right-wing supporters. The pursuit of statehood, justified by the need to protect Japan's claimed territory of the Senkaku Islands, parallels

<sup>33</sup> Thomas, A. Parham, "Cycles of Psychological Nigrescence," *The Counseling Psychologist* 17, no. 2 (1989): 187-226.

<sup>34</sup> Tanaka, *Japan's Orient*.

<sup>35</sup> Chih-yu Shih and Chiung-chiu Huang, "Bridging Civilizations through Nothingness: Manchuria as Nishida Kitaro's 'Place'," *Comparative Civilizations Review* 65 (2011): 4-17.

<sup>36</sup> Hsuan-lei Shao, *Zhan hou riben zhi zhongguo yanjiu xipu* [Post-war genealogy of China Studies in Japan] (Taipei: The Research and Educational Center for China Studies and Cross Taiwan-Strait Relations, National Taiwan University, 2009).

<sup>37</sup> Marlène Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

<sup>38</sup> Shinzo Abe, "Prime Minister of Japan Shinzo Abe 'Japan is Back'," CSIS Statesmen's Forum, accessed March 20, 2013, <http://csis.org/press/press-release/csis-statesmens-forum-prime-minister-japan-shinzo-abe-japan-back>.

similar attempts to overcome modernity, which is prescribed for Japan by the lessons obtained from Europe since the Meiji Restoration. The Hegelian designation of the Orient as backward must be addressed. Japan used to believe that it could transcend its own Oriental backwardness by confronting China, and the return of the Senkaku Islands dispute has been the single and most significant confrontation between China and Japan in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The struggle began in 1876 when Japan kidnapped the king of Ryukyu, a Chinese protectorate that owned Senkaku. This incident is similar to the nationalization of the Senkaku Islands by Japan in 2012. In the first initiative, former U.S. President Ulysses Grant served as a mediator in 1875 between Japan and China to ensure peace. However, Japan was reluctant and did not accept the compromise indicated in Grant's proposal to preserve Ryukyu as a Chinese protectorate. Japan defeated China 20 years later in 1895 and then Russia 30 years later in 1905, resulting in a successful Westernization of Japan that placed Japan on the world's radar. However, Japan felt restrained by the West and decided, half a century after the Ryukyu kidnap, to exercise the WHS by grouping the entire East Asia together as a bloc to challenge the West. Japan's dilemma of being indebted to both China and the West in its quest for national identity occurred in the Meiji period and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Modern statehood means that a state does not live under the protection or shadow of any Western country. In the 1920s, this independence to any Western country led to the refusal of Japan to succumb to the Washington Treaty system that downgraded Japan's status to a secondary power in East Asia. As a result, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Japan should also display dissatisfaction as an occupied nation where U.S. troops are stationed.

With the demonstration of Japan as the only actor capable of modernizing Asia in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, transcendence of Western civilization was first enacted. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Japan is similarly exhibiting its exclusive capability to curb and transform China. Transforming China into a civilized nation is a task Japan feels confident it can accomplish. Hence, Japan must not represent the West or China, but both China and the West. This statement is true for Japan in the 2010s and the 1920s and embodies the spirit of the WHS rooted in the PoP and emerging from the KSP.<sup>39</sup> Absolute nothingness is sufficiently embracive to the extent that other similar forms of Asianism in stock cannot remain idle in the long term. They will return to service after a long interlude. The metaphor of Manchukuo inspires different versions of Asianism to become a single method of self-denial<sup>40</sup> and a method to transcend sovereign order.<sup>41</sup> China, in general, additionally inspires a different form of Asianism in the Japanese intellectual circle, which is an Asianism that advocates peace, as exemplified by the liberal Asianist Akira Iriye.<sup>42</sup>

Once into the cycle, the then incumbent Abe administration submerged completely into the revival of the same WHS spirit. The roadmap for Japan cannot be clearer. It has the goal of becoming a normal state in mind. The Senkaku Islands policy exemplifies Japan's need and capacity to determine the use of a piece of Asian land. This policy does not reflect useful power politics because it ironically exposes Japan's vulnerability, nor a calculated national interest as China has already provided consent to the joint access to natural gas.

<sup>39</sup> Goto-Jones, *Re-Politicising the Kyoto School*.

<sup>40</sup> Yoshimi Takeuchi, "Yoakeno Kuni" [Country of the dawn], vol. 4 of *Takeuchi Yoshimi zenshū* [Takeuchi Yoshimi complete works] (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1967), 424.

<sup>41</sup> See a student of John K. Fairbank, Kenichiro Hirano, *The Japanese in Manchuria 1906-1931: A Study of the Historical Background of Manchukuo* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

<sup>42</sup> See another disciple of Fairbank, Akira Iriye, "Asia and America," in *The World of Asia*, ed. Akira Iriye and William J. Miller (St Louis: Forum Press, 1979), 1-11.

Politically inadvertent, the escalation of the issue requires not only the resolve to discipline China but also the promise of US support. Ironically, the US is the last hurdle before Japan can normalize its statehood. Rising above both China and the West was exactly the goal of Abe's grandfather Nobusuke Kishi (1896 to 1987) during the war. Both Nobusuke and Abe's grand uncle Sato Eisaka (1901 to 1975) were right-wing prime ministers. The atavism of the Great East Asian Sphere reveals the aversion to China's estrangement and anti-Japan sentiment, a parallel to the situation 150 years ago, as well as the present disapproval of Japan on Chinese nationalism. The rise of Japan in the early period was launched by a dispute over Korea's jurisdiction. This dispute was much greater and more significant than that over Senkaku. Nevertheless, Senkaku symbolizes revival and hope for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The ideal state that Japan pursues for itself through the Senkaku Islands dispute is a Japan that possesses its own national defense troops. This militarily independent Japan would then deprive the American troops of any legitimacy to stay and Japan's sovereign right to engage in war would then be legalized. The Senkaku Islands dispute thus registers an irrevocable agenda and a renewal of the WHS. Hence, the agenda Japan pursues through the Senkaku Islands is neither Chinese nor Western. The pursuit will not end until it succeeds or fails. This determination is illustrated by the fact that right-wing politicians have visited the Yasukuni Shrine where war criminals are honored. These and other incessant series of morale boosting campaigns virtually constrain the Abe government from any sign of retreat. A revoking move now would require very strong pressure from the U.S. or China. However, ironically, such pressure, especially from China, is probably exactly what constitutes the origin of Japan's desire to restore its national defense. If either the current rise of China or the lingering US dominance can defeat the use of the metaphor of the initial rise of Japan in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century over the Korean issue to explain the Senkaku Islands dispute, opposite versions of Asianism will emerge in due time.

#### **4.3. Taiwan and the adoption of a double-re-Worlding strategy**

Taiwan is a representative site to practice the philosophy of nothingness because of the country's uncertain and layered political history. Taiwan's political regimes have constantly changed along with a population composed of generations of immigrants. Each regime has built upon the basis of another high-performing regime that was established originally outside of the island. As a result, where historical Japan consciously floats between having European and Chinese characteristics, contemporary Taiwan floats consciously between having Chinese, Japanese, and, after WWII, American characteristics. Early suspicions that Taiwan was in a position of in-betweenness arose during the conflict between China and Japan in the 1930s and the 1940s. To resolve such an inner confrontation, Confucian and colonial Taiwanese intellectual Tsai Peihuo adopted the notion of East Asia from Japan's imperialism. In actuality, Taiwan in those days was a devout and sincere practitioner of KSP, more than Japan. Proclaimed as the "son of East Asia," Tsai, still remaining loyal to the Japanese Emperor, imagined Taiwan belonging to neither just Japan nor just China. Tsai's East Asian stance was by all means a mimicry of the WHS.<sup>43</sup> Tsai was imprisoned by the Japanese authorities for the potential harm his thought could do to the combative morale of the Japanese military, with his self-surrender to an identity of a nobody.

<sup>43</sup> Shih, "Taiwan as East Asia in Formation".

The political powerlessness of Tsai during WWII and the shaky regime in Taiwan that followed the war ironically confirmed the principles that a faithful following of the KSP is possible for the subaltern only. Subaltern people usually suffer from incapacity to change the world around them, but this incapacity can also stimulate deeper reflections that motivate learning. This motivation first requires withdrawal from one's own condition and then entry into another condition to acquire different experiences or self-knowledge.

By contrast, developing a stronger power such as Japan, which practices the WHS, would be similar to constructing a civilizational bridge. When a strong disciple of the WHS preaches lessons to different parts of the world urging mutual learning, this may become a burden of nothingness. Both the partial West and backward China are legitimate targets of the transformation of the WHS. Japan undertook this imagined burden of teaching both sides during the war but did not find success in learning from different sides having already emerged in subaltern Taiwan, which first became a Japanese colony and later as an asylum for the defeated Chinese Civil War regime of the Kuomintang. Nevertheless, the intellectual capacity to deposit the inexpressible feeling of in-betweenness in the subconscious condition for the time being and then launch an atavistic revival many decades later validates the power of nothingness as a mode of self-identification.

The unavailing appeal to epistemological tranquility and ontological equality of Tsai's East Asian childhood continued during the Kuomintang takeover after WWII and then was furthered by American intervention in East Asia where the containment of a Communist China imposed a strategic and ideological role for the Kuomintang regime. However, the Kuomintang had its own Civil War agenda/legacy, and, as a result, Taiwan did not become just another Vietnam or another base of containment. Chiang Ching-kuo, the last Civil War leader, struggled to establish his own platform on which the Cold War mentality and the preparation for a post-Civil War Taiwan could coexist. The Cold War mentality consisted of the idea of containing China under U.S. leadership, while the preparation for a post-Civil War Taiwan existed by reconnection with China in opposition to U.S. interests.

Similarly, post-colonial Taiwan had its own independent agenda that was different from the one of the ruling Kuomintang. Although the colonial worldview may have been suppressed under Kuomintang rule, in reality Lee Tenghui was able to capitalize on the decline of the Kuomintang in accordance with a retrieved colonial platform.<sup>44</sup> Lee was ready to revive the colonial legacy when conditions matured to the appropriate point. His alienation from China awaited its turn to replace his Chinese qualities influenced by the Kuomintang. While the first hidden agenda was the attempt by Chiang Ching-kuo to bypass the hegemonic Cold War, the second agenda that carried post-colonial alienation from the Kuomintang was hidden from the ruling Kuomintang. The second agenda was self-suppressed by Lee for four decades because of the strategic silencing of the anti-Chinese identity, which was powerfully bred by Japanese colonialism.

The unique double hidden agenda displayed compromises of hiding between the Kuomintang's post-Civil War and the U.S. Cold War, and between the post-colonials of Taiwan and Kuomintang's Civil War. These double hidden agendas empirically demonstrated the philosophy of nothingness. Re-Worlding is the proper method to excavate these hidden

<sup>44</sup> Yu-chun Huang, *Zai Taiwan yu zhongguo zhi jian—li denthui de sixiang mailuo yu zhongguo renshi* [Trajectory of Lee Teng-hui's thought and his views on China] (Taipei: The Research and Educational Center for China Studies and Cross Taiwan-Strait Relations, National Taiwan University, 2013).



agendas to recognize the agency that resists the consecutive rising powers of the ruling regimes that have arrived in Taiwan. The first hidden agenda utilized U.S. Cold War resources for the purposes of Chiang Ching-kuo to reconnect with China, in addition to the role assigned by the U.S. to contain China. The second hidden agenda was no more than an affective memory, completely unattended and without utterance, ensuring no indication of alienation from China. Therefore, in post-colonial Taiwan, becoming related to the incumbent power is always more imminent than any platform of rationalism. Each hidden agenda empowers the subaltern in question with a ready subjectivity to act incompatibly with the hegemonic expectation, regardless of a positive judgment toward their hegemonic leader, such as in the case of the Kuomintang toward the U.S., or a negative judgment, such as in the case of post-colonial Taiwan toward the Kuomintang. By critically reflecting on the hegemonic discourse, the hidden agenda is ultimately impacting the world agenda, hence worldliness.

Taiwan's uncertain and layered political history prepares its residents efficiently to accept incoming regimes. Thus, the society does not intend to recollect politically incorrect history for its present time. Double-re-Worlding serves two different generations of PoP, namely, one that arrived before the Japanese colonial rule and the other after the end of it. The self-suppressed conditions of each of the two generations can usually persevere in the sub-consciousness and can be retrieved only when the condition has matured for re-emergence. PoP articulates the condition of layered sub-consciousness in a consistent rationality of hidden resistance. Taiwan's condition of double re-Worlding also provides a more sophisticated case of re-Worlding. The post-colonial agenda, which came to power suddenly upon the demise of the Civil War generation, thrives on a pro-Taiwan independence discourse. Re-Worlding is no longer a mere resistance to hegemony. Instead, re-Worlding comprises cycles of hidden agendas, recalled to service from a long-term, albeit subconscious, memory to resist a substituting, albeit imagined, hegemony. Taiwan's bifurcated populations, each in support of a particular scheme of re-Worlding, are conscious of the existence of each other. The decision is about whether or not China is the hegemony to resist. The double-re-Worlding strategy is contingent upon the identity that is more functional in providing Taiwan's global representation. This case is different from Japan where the population is not constantly divided.

The coexistence of contradicting positions toward the Diaoyutai Islands should not be surprising under this layered circumstance. The Kuomintang changed its position from being the true representative of China that would regain the islands to a non-Chinese nation that only cares for a peaceful resolution. The pro-independence force supports Japan's claim of sovereignty. Partially plagued by the Chinese image of Chiang Ching-kuo, the U.S. is continuously worried that a pro-independent Taiwan would desire cooperation with China. With China's expectations to support Taiwan's position on the Diaoyutai Islands, Taiwan's quiet attitude toward the nationalization issue is apparently most serviceable to the acquisition of negative evaluation on China. Likewise, as Sino-Japanese relations become extremely weak, Taiwan's post-colonial link with Japan contributes best to the representation of a non-Chinese Taiwan. This re-Worlding strategy is effectively revealed in Taiwan's agenda focusing exclusive on fishing rights. The agenda dissolved the political demand for action to confront Japan's unilateral nationalization of the Diaoyutai Islands and crashed any lingering speculation of Taiwan-China cooperation for the time being.

#### 4.4. China and BoR Proposition: relationship as a conscious place

When the self-perception of China was at the center of the world during the dynastic period, the application of its tributary system was hardly synchronic. The Qing court, for example, arranged tributary relationships with its neighbors, each according to their own conditions. The Qing followed no single formula, and exemption from a rigid model was the only formula that was applicable in all cases. This arrangement explained why the kidnapping of the king of Ryukyu did not immediately incur a military reaction from the presumably stronger China at that time. For the Qing court, examining President Grant's proposal was far more rational if the purpose was no more than saving China's nominal suzerainty over Ryukyu. Subsequent abortion of Grant's mediation only led to the Qing court's decision not to take any action with the hope that such inaction would, first, avoid the embarrassment of the Chinese fighting with a small neighbor over a much smaller land and, second, camouflage the embarrassment that China was completely uninterested in its own suzerainty.

The relative negligence of the BoR toward principles or values is in contrast with re-Worlding in the sense that the re-Worlding philosophy seeks to overcome the heavy dependence of the subaltern on hegemonic sanctioning of economic, political, and ideological partnerships that enforce hegemonic principles or values. By presenting Taiwan's maneuvering of the U.S. partnership in its own battle with China, a re-Worlding method for Taiwan brings to surface the subaltern's agency hidden in its mimicry of hegemonic discourse. Re-Worlding is not in China's favor. Rather, the BoR is the rationality for China to bypass the containment of a rising China contrived by the hegemonic forces. By stabilizing reciprocal relationships on a bilateral basis, with as many neighboring countries as possible, China can offset the challenge of containment. This means that China has to disregard the domestic institutional, ideological, and religious characteristics of its neighboring countries. The BoR is valuable for any newly emerging nation, any rising power in the face of an increasingly expanding and complicated encounter of the world, and any declining hegemony with a relaxed synchronizing imposition to appease allies. The declining hegemonies can include both the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Chinese dynasty and the 21<sup>st</sup> century US. All of them face an IR full of contradictions. To survive or to proceed, the nation should manage its uncertain environment by avoiding synchronizing relationships that proliferate in its expanding or shrinking scope of negotiation.

As China rises, the country precisely faces the challenge of proliferated relationships. The influence of these relationships expands to exert a strong presence in all its neighbors and reaches far into Africa and Latin America. As a result, the existing hegemonic U.S. and its allies sense the threat of the newcomer in being able to transcend boundaries that previously restrained the sphere of influence. Defending the rise in world politics from the rebalance of power by the hegemonic U.S. and soothing anxious neighbors are apparently very different tasks. In addition, a watching Europe that is composed of the self-regarded moral superpower in West Europe, a post- but anti-communist East Europe, and a competitive and yet occasionally conveniently allied Russia requires soothing as well. These tasks are not the most complicated, however, when compared with those in anti-unification Taiwan, recalcitrant North Korea, and assertive right-wing Japan, not to mention potentially rebellious Hong Kong.

Exemplifying relative nothingness, China's difficulty in handling very complicated relationships does not arise from its own confused identity, but from the various incongruent

roles expected by countries worldwide to be performed by China. In the case of Japan, its international environment has not undergone significant change except during the rise of China that resulted in an identity puzzle forcing Japan to choose aligning either to the West or to the East. This idiosyncratic, internal puzzle compels the Abe government into the conservative side that may send the less conservative sides of national identity into acquiescence, thus repeating a familiar cycle. In comparison, the rise of China proceeds with the art of relationship. In East Asia, relationship management means that China has to cope simultaneously with a Taiwan that intensively asserts its worldliness, a U.S. that anxiously applies some synchronic values/institutions to co-opt China, and a Japan that ambivalently switches from being a member of Asia, to a junior ally of the U.S., and to a normal state in the world.

The cycles of right-wing identity in Japan are drawn from the depot of all historical identities. The cycles likewise come from the re-Worlding strategy of Taiwan to distance itself from Chinese identification and to answer primarily to the call for a clear self-identity under globalization that is embedded in the hegemonic order and has multicultural sensibilities. This quest for difference brings Taiwan and Japan closer in portraying an estranging China that rises on illiberal politics, which the two former countries oppose. Taiwan's quest for independence requires no more than a statement of difference, while Japan's adherence to Western synchronic values imposes a duty to transform China. In line with its relational sensibilities, China has to concede to Taiwan's liberal arrangement, demonstrating that Taiwan's return to China would not cause any serious adaptive problems. However, China would resist any liberalization proposed by either Japan or the US. The BoR is alienated from such an interventionary policy. Therefore, BoR requires China to treat liberalism inconsistently, depending on who promotes it.

BoR serves as a bridge between the WHS and re-Worlding because the purpose of BoR in relating strives to bypass sited identities and pushes for alternative sited identities to be recollected from memory. Confronting China's BoR, for example, Taiwan recollects a dormant colonial identity to support re-Worlding of an exclusively non-Chinese Taiwan. Nevertheless, China's BoR can also support a pro-China identity in Taiwan. For example, China can concur to the sovereignty of Diaoyutai Islands with Taiwan's pledge, given that Taiwan willingly continues to represent China and bypass the colonial identity.

To distinguish China's intended, albeit unsuccessful, compromise to Taiwan and Japan, China has to avoid providing the impression to the US or to other potential parties of territorial conflict, such as Vietnam, the Philippines, and India, that China is ready to yield in the latter cases. China resorts to relationship management. Basically, China proposes joint ventures over disputed territorial seas or islands, with other parties of conflict being able to make their own claim internally. As long as the internal claim is not brought to the bilateral relationship, the claim should not cause concerns from other parties. Before any consensus can be achieved, China resorts to symbolic as well as mixed sanctions to simultaneously show the country's determination to defend sovereign rights and its willingness to compromise. In the case of the Diaoyudao Islands, China has engaged Japan's nationalization by patrolling the air and the sea around the islands, by announcing an air defense zone, and by occasional approaching without landing on the islands as if the dispute requires no immediate resolution. China actually demands no more than a statement from Japan that nationalization does not affect the disputed status of the island. The rationale behind the mix of unilateral compromise

and the subsequent demand of the other side to yield is to cut cross-positions. Along with China's proposal of conflict resolution is the unfailing reiteration that the dispute is bilateral. Hence, any hegemonic intervention can be considered as ill intended and counter-productive.

In short, the Senkaku/Diaoyutai/Diaoyu Islands has limited national interest implications regarding natural gas, which no one has actualized yet. In avoiding the reoccurrence of disputes, joint ventures have been attempted and agreed upon. Therefore, no significant national interests are involved in the dispute. Consider that China has not shown any interest in obtaining the islands from the current occupier Japan. Maneuvering for more power on the islands can be considered disadvantageous to Japan. Strategically, no one is ready or can force a solution. In brief, Japan's nationalization is apparently premature from the balance of power perspective. However, Japan's nationalization reflects the desire to recount the rise of the country at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The ability to determine the fate of the islands is critical to the transcendence of international relations, which is dominated by China and the US. Taiwan's acquiescence over the process of nationalization reflects the quest for the independent representation of an anti-China identity, which was ironically initially planted by Japanese colonialism. Finally, China's resort to ambiguity reflects the substitution of relationship for territorial sovereignty.

A note on the role of the US as a representative example of "absolute being," along with the plausible routes of retreat currently unrecognized, can implicate upon the scope of applicability of scientific PoP. To begin, the US' reiteration of its adherence to freedom of navigation concerning the dispute attests to its subscription of synchronizing IR. With that said, the US could support, or restrain, both Japan and Taiwan depending on the bilateral "BoR", which could demand the two allies to compromise in order to please the US, or alternatively oblige to the US for it to back them up in the struggle against China indiscriminately despite the effect on the freedom of navigation. This BoR consideration could likewise apply to the US-China relationship so that the two allies serve primarily as strategic dependents to help facilitate China's proper response expected by the US. Moreover, given China's continuous rise, it is likely that the US would reduce the freedom of navigation to a peculiar kind of Monroe Doctrine on behalf of Japan to assert the "re-Worlding" of the islands. All the incidents might play into effect for fast rising China to potentially switch to the place of "absolute being" in the presently unlikely case where the tributary system could re-emerge with prescribed rules and procedures for other nations to follow.

## 5. Conclusion: Systemic Transcendence over Interest and Power

The PoP propositions do not predict the actual foreign policy or the necessity of nations to behave in certain patterns, given the context of the international structure. The PoP propositions also do not even formulate predictions on how nations will generally behave. However, all three PoP propositions do make predictions about how the system behaves in the long run as well as how asymmetric relationships proceed. Other similar theoretical attempts that are familiar to IR disciples all focus on major power behavior. One noticeable realist example includes the prediction of John Mearsheimer on confrontation during hegemonic transitions,<sup>45</sup> as one of the most discussed systemic theories that anticipate the inevitability of confrontation between existing and rising powers. Liberal IR scholar Robert Keohane

<sup>45</sup> John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001).

theorized on institutional functionalism that continuously support the hegemonic order after the hegemonic power loses the capacity to cover the free-riders of its order.<sup>46</sup> A similar string of constructivist IR exists, as presented by Alexander Wendt who predicts that the system will move toward a world government from where major powers learn rationally together.<sup>47</sup> In comparison, the PoP theorization examines the stability of the system.

PoP theorization has three specific features that are different from mainstream IR theorization. First, PoP theorization is not a study on how the order between major powers can be established or explained, but instead, the study cares about how nations adapt to major power politics by joining, resisting, appropriating, reconciling, avoiding, transcending, or even defeating them. PoP theorization predicts that the order is never orderly. Second, PoP theorization specifically allows nations to make judgments that will affect systemic behavior. Unlike the majority of IR theories with a structural argument, PoP theorization demonstrates how the structural explanation can accommodate judgmental factors and how nations are capable of thinking and choosing under undecidable circumstances. Third, PoP theorization confronts both purposes and their systemic consequences for all varied nations, while other theories focus primarily on major powers.

In summary, the IR theorization, in accordance with PoP, relativizes major power politics and their quest for order that is composed of synchronic values or institutions. By contrast, PoP is premised on non-synthetic identities in layered or multi-layered histories. There is no pretension of either a destiny or a destined fate. PoP IRT explains how nations under the influence of major power politics judge their conditions and rely on combined existing cultural resources to determine their place in world politics. PoP predicts that IR's systemic stability cannot be maintained over a set of congruent identities because history's longevity allows for previous politically incorrect identities to either return in due time with proper clues or emerge from creative recombinations of old and extant cultural resources. The PoP specifically predicts that nations caught between different identities will experience cycles in their IR, while those with an expansive scope of IR or experiencing a decline from the hegemonic status will adopt the BoR. Less influential nations will practically reinterpret hegemonic order to meet their otherwise inexpressible motivations.

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<sup>46</sup> Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

<sup>47</sup> Alexander Wendt, "Why a World State Is Inevitable?" *European Journal of International Relations* 9, no. 4 (2003): 491-542.

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