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The Place of Nothingness

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Introduction

The Kyoto School of Philosophy (KSP), which originated in Taisho, Japan from 1912 to 1926 and obtained its name during the Showa period from 1926 to 1989, has received atavistic attention in the past two decades. The Philosophy of Place (PoP), initially composed by Nishida Kitaro, the founding father of the KSP, has specifically stimulated curiosity on new possibilities of arranging alternative international relations (IR) for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The cultural sensibility and anti-hegemonic character of KSP, which sought to overcome the Europeanization and Americanization of the world prior to World War II (WWII), meets the normative call for multiple voices in contemporary studies of IR. Most revisits to KSP exclusively perceive the PoP as a normative theory on improving world politics (Davis, Schroeder and Worth, 2011; Wilkinson, 2009; Goto-Jones, 2007). Nishida was explicit about his ontological appeal to pure experience, as well as his epistemological quest for universality, which indicate a potential for scientific inquiry. The literature therefore owes him a scientific, vis-à-vis normative, appreciation.

Other theoretical attempts to counter the perceived hegemony of the Anglo-Saxon International Relations Theory (IRT) are typically both scientific and normative. An example of this is the emerging trend to re-world subaltern subjectivities by demonstrating the difference of world politics from the understanding presented in mainstream IR literature (Arlene and Blaney, 2012). Scholarships on 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 (Noesselt, 2012; Wang, 2013). IR followers draw from Chinese cultural resources to present a different ideal of world politics (Zhao, 2009). 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 (Qin, 2009; Yan, 2011). In brief, the current normative challenges to mainstream IRT typically offer scientific explanation of world politics, which renders the revisit of KSP as incomplete without the simultaneous exploration of scientific implications of PoP.

The succeeding discussion compares KSP with two other competitors, namely, postmodern worlding and the Chinese balance of relationships (BoR) in their shared campaign for alternative IRTs. For convenience, the country of historical practice for each alternative IRT is used to illustrate the plausibility of different IR theorizations. Accordingly, Japan is a suitable example for PoP, Taiwan for re-worlding, and China for BoR. The

remainder of the paper argues that the three alternatives complement each other and are illustrative of universal IRT of an East Asian origin. In addition, the paper particularly focuses on the scientific principles derived from PoP.

### Three Anti-Hegemonic Attempts

The theory of "hegemonic IR" refers to the nature of world politics being dominated by a single discourse. This nature of world politics is essentially war and peace premised on state-centrism and undergirded by one superpower and other major powers, which is primarily exemplified by the US and by western European countries. Hegemonic IR contradict with and transform non-western world orders elsewhere, including the relevant cases of Japan, Taiwan, and China, resulting in their ambivalence toward their pasts. The PoP provides clarity on the identity puzzle of Japan and of other nations with a similar problem by asking the possibility of a nation to represent both East and West, leading to a non-western, non-territorial, or non-centrist position. The puzzle emphasizes the aim of Japan for normalcy of in-betweenness, (Shimizu 2014, Josuke 2008) which is a statement of alienation from hegemonic IR.

In contrast to hegemonic IR, KSP conceives the idea of universalism as one of becoming others. Universalism is enhanced by accommodating or acquiring additional thoughts and identities in one's own self-imagination. As a bridge between civilizations, conversion and synthesis are redundant, if not harmful (Shimizu 2009). Western modernity demonstrates a strong need to convert others from a differing trajectory to a common, that is, universal, destiny. Instead for KSP, a strong need for self-conversion exists so that the adoption of Western modernity can enhance the degree of Japan's universalism. Under such self-concept, Japan remains to be the sole nation that is capable of constantly becoming others 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 WHS was allegedly "to overcome modernity". This mission was not to deny modernity in its entirety, but to transcend the partial nature of western modernity. The other side of the coin was to modernize the rest of "the Greater East Asia", 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 portion of the East Asian self.

Accordingly, Japan's in-between place is presumably a place of nothingness or a non-place where Nishida wished that differing nations can 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 PoP is that neither the East nor the West should expand or conquer the other. Their commonality must not lie in the teleological historiography because preservation of their difference is the spirit that guarantees their inclusion in a universal world, resulting in the multi-directionality of WHS. Where the

multi-directionality of WHS is present, the coexistence of East and West can only be traced to a shared origin where all come from and each flourishes on its own condition. The origin that lies deeper than the consciousness of difference is by definition the place of nothingness. PoP is therefore not the same concept of self-other as that mentioned in the literature on identity (Connolly 2002). For PoP, both the self and its others are non-synthesized identities to be gathered by an ultimate being in nothingness. The formulation of PoP is thus easily connected with the imagined origin of the universe and is practically coupled with Japanese Shinto, which provides a metaphor of the origin of Japan.

The difficulty that Japan had encountered with the backward East Asia, particularly China, was its incapacity for effective learning. From the past dynastic China to Communist China and then to the rise of capitalist China, the Chinese people have 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 disadvantage suggests China's incapacity for true learning. According to the classic Japanese explanation (Tanaka 1993), which remains popular after the ongoing reform 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, China appears to have the capability to accommodate differing values and identities by ritually relating them. However, China does not learn at a level deeper than the instrumental use of alien civilization. Therefore, the Chinese claim to universality is nominal, spurious, and lacks appreciation, despite the similar capability to facilitate coexistence of Western modernity and Chinese culture. As a result, learning is at best partial and eventually reduced to harmonizing and stabilizing a relationship. In the KHS perspective, China by itself is unable to resist the West, nor engage in serious reform.

To become more genuinely universal, Japan executes both entry into and withdrawal from any partial identities that are not to be synthesized. Japan should exemplify for the West and East Asia the process of entering and withdrawing from the site of their existential experiences to exercise re-entry. One has to consider "place" as a metaphor of identity, along with the notion of site. For Japan, in contrast to Western modernity, the exercise of withdrawing from a specific "place" to "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. 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, and then the celebration of an emerging world history that accommodates and transcends all sites is achieved.

Framing Western modernity, East Asian resistance, and Chinese management of relationship, along with Japan's WHS, PoP categorizes "place" into four different types (Ng, 2011; Huang W. H. 2010). First, a place of being/identity is an absolute place trapped in false rationalism and universalism, such as Western modernity. This place constitutes

contemporary hegemonism. Second, a place of relative being/identity is a relative place that resists hegemonism, such as the quest of East Asia for indigenous identity in Taiwan, Korea, Vietnam, and so on, in which re-worlding belongs. A typical formulation of relative being 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 to connect or permeate places as well as relative places, such as the Chinese scheme of relating to each other in specific contexts, which include BoR. One example is Chinese Daoism, while another can be non-alignment by Jawaharlal Nehru. Finally, a place of absolute nothingness is where time and space meet to render the other three places thinkable and seeable. KHS demonstrates this perspective that cultivates an archetypal subjectivity to transcend any mundane conditions. The second, third, and last places are outlined in the following.

Relative Identity. The place of relative identity uses the emerging, contemporary IR expression of “worldliness”. Creating worldliness of a site is essentially worlding it. In the past, worlding was a geo-cultural project of global capitalism/hegemony to monopolize meanings (Petman, 1996; Spivak, 1985). 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 worlding results in a declaration that hegemonic power cannot monopolize either ontological or epistemological resources. Sited worlding critically assesses any hegemonic attempt to reproduce dominance over subalterns. Sited 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 (Paolini, Elliott, and Moran, 1996).

The methods of re-worlding must be multiplied and improvised as both recast memories of various forms, and their re-interpretations serve as methods to reach testimonies to differences, aimed at thinking back on hegemonic arrangements of lives at the subaltern sites as well as writing and acting back to provincialize hegemonic order. In other words, worlding incurs the site-centric methodology and aims at cultivating a counter perspective in the face of an overwhelming hegemony. The editors of the *Routledge Worlding Beyond the West Series* declare that

The aim of worlding is to explore the role of geocultural factors in setting the concepts and epistemologies through which IR knowledge is produced. In particular, worlding seeks to identify alternatives for thinking about the "international" that are more in tune with local concerns and traditions outside the West (Arlene and Waever, 2009, Blurb).

In this view, hegemony should be impossible in a worlding scheme. Victimized people reincarnate by looking back through an imagined subjectivity belonging exclusively to the site, which is not subject to 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 Legalism are employed to examine the coexistence of differences (Zhao 2009), relational reciprocity (Qin 2009), and hierarchical stability (Yan 2011). 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. An example can be found in the arrangement between the Chinese dynastic court and its neighbors or between the late Qing court and various imperial powers, which was flexibly designed to meet the differing conditions of each tributary state or imperialist power, upon which the two sides build their relationship (Liao, 2012). 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 considers an imagined cycle of governability and chaos as typical and still officially sanctioned at present (see, for example, Jiang, 2012). 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, BoR pragmatically adopts a laissez-faire approach in handling the domestic chaos of a partner.

According to the aforementioned Japanese criticism of Chinese over-reliance on ritual and relationship, the Chinese intellectual history is not particularly keen to the adoption of Western institutions or values. Chinese international relationship is therefore highly independent from value or institution consideration. 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. 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's 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 (Huang and Shih 2014). 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 power, interest, and value, although both principles are inconsequential from the KHS perspective.

When both domestic cycles and balance of power are disconnected from Chinese international relations, any multi-lateral arrangement to channel intervention or synchronic value to justify the disconnection would be redundant. If IR can be reduced to a combination

of bilateral relations, other universal learning is no longer necessary as the source of good governance at present may become the source of chaos in the next cycle and vice versa. After all, what would be the excitement in 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. Ultimately, only reciprocal relationships are practical and transcendent (Hwang Kwang Kuo, 2012), and if China cultivates positive long-term relationships, others will always reciprocate depending on capability. Values and ideologies become irrelevant 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 in 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 (Ames and Hall, 2003).

Absolute Nothingness. According to a KSP scholar, the place of absolute nothingness is exempted from all cultural maneuverings that maintain relational stability and, under the condition of nothingness, transcendence replaces resistance (Nishitani, 1983). The place of absolute nothingness is composed of pure experience, according to Nishida, prior to the acquisition of any meaning. In all of the encounters with differing societies in the past, as well as those in the future, the vicissitudes experienced in one’s own society and the transcendent attempts to move beyond sited limitations occur in the place of absolute nothingness. The place of absolute nothingness provides both peaceful and violent unpredictable clues and calms all conflicts, with or without justice. The place of absolute nothingness contains the sources of cycles, prompts new cycles, or reversely represses them. Hegemonies are possible but never permanent or universal. Multi-sited worlding and re-worlding never stop, 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 any pretentiously universal cause, one can lose the sense of duty toward his/her life and that of others in insensible and insensitive nothingness (Heisig and Maraldo, 1995; Hubbard and Swanson, 1997).

Practically, the freedom to act and the quest for the freedom to act beyond the physical limit testify the fearless spirit being expected of Japan that owns WHS. This fearlessness includes 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 is highly extreme that Japan endeavors to become more modern than the West or to become more practiced in Sinology than China. Learning leads to the unlikely withdrawal to nothingness for those already involved in faithful learning until they are physically or socially exhausted at 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 culture to sustain and improve its modern fate (Tanaka 1993). Given the country's Sinological spirit, Japan's acquisition of modernity proceeded at a level much higher than the materialistic civilization of the West, which provides the identity of in-betweenness that fully describes the international society.

Table I lists the categories of places of PoP: place of absolute identity, place of relative identity, place of relative nothingness, and place of absolute nothingness. Synchronization should be considered as an enactment of place of absolute identity, while synchronicity is 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. Accordingly, synchronization is the exact opposite of absolute nothingness.

Table I. about here

## From Normative Failures to Scientific Inquiries

### Normative Failures of the Pursuit for Post-Western Sitedness

Multi-sitedness, worlding, place, nothingness, sovereignty, agency, subjectivity, Asia, and China-centrism are popular yet estranging concepts that celebrate their sited subjectivities, but can be applied into unilateralism or hegemonism when incurred by power. This application is what overcame the KSP before WWII, with the suggestion of considering the role of local/national differences in seriously leading expansion and colonialism (Williams, 2004). The claim of "otherness" by a local subaltern is potentially dangerous because sited identity of this sort can justify internal cleansing or external expansion, as well as invited conquest. The politics of silence that forced the subsequent surrender of the left wing to hyper-nationalism after the democratic Taishao period illustrates internal cleansing as well as self-cleansing. Japan's colonization of East Asia before and during WWII is an example of this expansion. (Shimizu 2014) Finally, the American occupation of Japan at the latter's defeat illustrated invited conquest.

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 true universalism. The epistemological caveat lies in the shared anxiety of the loss of sitedness under the sensed hegemonic intrusion. The notions of “post-White” order under the KHS and the “post-Western” claim under the Routledge re-worlding project coincide with the identification of an imagined self-site. Note that KHS disciples thaw sensibilities toward space by claiming themselves to be all-encompassing. Nevertheless, a Chinese admirer of Japanese modern thoughts trace a string of obsessive adherence to a certain inexpressible, but invincible, sense of space, similar to the shelter or the identity (Sun, 2003). This spatial sensibility reproduces the imagined and re-imagined possibility of being controlled, monopolized, brainwashed, invaded, intruded, suppressed, exploited, and so on. If anyone is naturally different in an exclusive self-ontological site, others would similarly be anxious toward the contagiousness of a perceived difference, which would lead to the desire to overtake a specific site. In fact, an imagined difference can easily cultivate the desire of a major power to conquer the exotic. After all, only those who possess a different site can be the target of occupation.

To render a philosophical remedy to the spatial anxiety, both BoR and KHS examine the possibility of a transcendental site as opposed to an exclusive self-site. Note that loss, merging, disappearance, death, and any other transcendental form of nothingness are no less natural. In addition, with sitedness as not necessarily physical, fixed, or enclosed, sitedness does not have to be individualized or differentiated (Ling 2002). Rather, sitedness can be shared in nothingness, as well as in the place of identity. Imagine a woman that marries into a nameless condition embedded in a patriarchal network. She watches her sons becoming independent or anticipating her eventual burial in a graveyard completely alienated from her origin. However, she can still enjoy her life or exhibit control, though she has no tangible site to claim. If she would claim a site, she may incur unwanted attention and lose her power, which she may or may not enjoy. Could the subaltern’s obsession with an exclusive self-site be defined and enacted and actually collude with the imagined or practical hegemony by making the site discursively possible and psychologically tempting for the hegemonic power to conquer? 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 (Mizoguchi, 1999).

If sitedness and identity are two sides of the same coin, 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 challenging the hegemonic instinct to conquer as many as possible, while discouraging united resistance because of the consciously cherished differences. Therefore, the normative appeal of the



Worlding project may practically backfire. Could nothingness, as a substitute, have any empirical relevance except its normative claim of transcendence?

### Scientific Inquiries

Normative failures of re-worlding can be proved or disproved by empirical research, which may contribute to the improvement of the Worlding project. Both worlding and BoR have scientific potentials. Worlding is a method of tracing how empirical learning and practice of hegemonic role assignments in 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 (Scott 1990; Tickner and Blaney 2013). 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 (Womack 2006, Huang 2014). BoR does not have to be normatively preferred to be effective because it parallels the balance of power and influences IR where the balance is ambiguous or impossible to formulate. Balancing strategies alone is rarely successful in most cases.

PoP can be scientific, similar to worlding and BoR, but a scientific mode of PoP is rarely attempted. PoP is a solution to the unavailing anti-hegemonic projects by generating scientifically hypothesized processes of transcendence that in-between societies undergo to recall hegemonic imposition. This hypothesized process pertains to 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 a philosophical site where all those alternatives temporarily in oblivion are stored. Amnesia is a plausible contingency in the aftermath of ideological, institutional, and identity conflicts, transforming societies in-between civilizations into practiced adaptors to conditions. 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 and in both worlding and BoR research. They are able to partially predict cycles scientifically. Similarly according to PoP, the following three propositions must be considered:

1. The Nothingness Proposition. Aborted identities are highly possible 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 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 at further improvement 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 the alternative principles of IR. The systemic level does not determine exactly which to return. Usually, this is determined by idiosyncratic factors such as family traditions, factional politics, and economic decline. This proposition portrays drastic turns to different IR principles by nations torn between incongruent identities. Their seeming incapacity to establish a compromise is in line with their readiness for a drastic turn. Silent cooperation of domestic constituency in support of such turns testifies to the inexpressibility of absolute nothingness.

2. The 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 worlding epistemology, the worlding proposition suggests that the recollection of an identity from the subconscious condition is better 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 to resist 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 not shared by the encountered hegemony.

3. The BoR Proposition. If the choice of identity is contingent on 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 that nations live together more easily if they disregard their differences in identities or values. Therefore, all cultural resources should be made ready anytime to comfort a particular target. Conscious transcendence over encountered differences reifies the condition of relative nothingness. The balance of relationships can be more likely be 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. By consciously avoiding specific positions in a multi-lateral setting, while relying on different identity strategies in a variety of bilateral settings, the condition of relative nothingness is illustrated.

## An Empirical PoP

### The Three Cases

The hegemonic order may appear inapplicable if the 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/Diaoyudao/Diaoyutai Islands. The sources of confrontation and their resolution 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 sidedness. 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 can be obtained by rituals that allow all to pretend ownership or war as a result of the purpose to restore such pretentious rituals. Each contender historically used a particular discursive weapon. Japan derived KHS from PoP. Taiwan applied the double-worlding scheme. Lastly, China adopted the balance of relationship. Nevertheless, these schemes were performed in cycles.

The scientists of PoP can specifically predict policy predisposition that has systemic consequences. To begin, none of the three schemes is a direct respondent to power politics, nor to immediate or apparent national interest consideration. 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 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 Japan as the colonizer. China's return to an ambiguous, pre-modern conditions of sovereignty that relies on the ritual of joint venture or on the deliberately ambiguous rhetoric stabilizes bilateral relationships in a preferable state of no conclusion. 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.

Japan. 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, Japanese people must completely withdraw from other possibilities until the continuation is no longer feasible.

Taiwan. 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 to 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 refusal leads to the inevitability of Taiwan allowing Japan's unilateral nationalization of the disputed island. Worlding requires Taiwan to choose the hegemony from its layered history as the target of resistance.

China. 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 the changing international relations. A stabilized relationship should nevertheless include sovereign integrity. 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 ownership of the disputed island. However, ambiguity is preferred to clarity in this case.

#### 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 exhibited its backward otherness under modernity, the base of world revolution under socialism, 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. In fact, a common phenomenon for notorious personality types of "rupture" and "giving in", as noted in contemporary historiography, demonstrates a change of course made by a once-adamant advocate of something else. 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 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 in China's estranging socialist identity. For some time, the Fukuzawa solution of "Departing 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 (Li, 2008; Huang C. N. and Shih, 2009). 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 the academic circles after the war. Each politically incorrect view had their turn in history and had waited for another opportunity after being silenced by conditions. Cycles of political (in)correctness, which are frequent in subaltern societies (Parham 1989), attest to the place of absolute nothingness as a depot of subconscious identity. 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. Manchukuo was tantamount to the place of nothingness in Shiratori's narrative (Tanaka 1993), being the common root of all civilizations, and was designed as the princely land of all nationalities. Manchukuo is a reification of the place of absolute nothingness (Shih and Huang C. C., 2011). 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 vicissitude career style (Shao, 2009).

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 (Laruelle, 2008). Similarly, the pursuit of statehood in 21<sup>st</sup> century Japan by the right wing, as supported by Premier Abe (2013), was an attempt to move Japan beyond an occupied territory of the U.S. or the West. 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 WHS.

The nationalization of the Senkaku Islands of Japan in 2012 and the demonstration of Japanese military strength against China in 2013 and 2014 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 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 backward Orient must be addressed, as the stagnated civilization is testified by both the advanced Europe and the backward China. Japan believed that they can transcend their 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 owning Senkaku. This incident reminded the nationalization of the Senkaku Islands of Japan in 2012. In the first initiative, former U.S. President Grant served as a mediator 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 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 WHS by grouping the entire East Asia to challenge the West. Japan's dilemma of being indebted to both China and the West in its quest for national identity occurred in Meiji period and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Modern statehood relies on a state that 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. 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 their exclusive capability to curb and transform China. Transforming China into a civilized nation is a task Japan feels confident that they can accomplish. Hence, Japan must neither be the West nor China or conversely, both China and the West. This statement is true for Japan in the 2010s and the 1920s and embodies the spirit of WHS rooted in PoP and emerging from KSP (Goto-Jones, 2005). Absolute nothingness is sufficiently embracive that other similar forms of Asianism in stock cannot remain their silence without returning to service after a long interlude. The metaphor of Manchukuo inspires different versions of Asianism to become a method of self-denial (Takeuchi Yoshimi, 1967) and a method to transcend sovereign order (Hirano Kenichiro, 1982, a student of John K. Fairbank). 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 (1979), another disciple of Fairbank.

Once into the cycle, the contemporary Abe administration submerged completely into the revival of the same WHS spirit. The road map for Japan cannot be clearer, with the goal of a normal state in mind. The Senkaku Islands policy exemplified 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. 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 the 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 is 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 ultimate ideal state that Japan pursues for the Senkaku Islands is that possessing its own national defense troops. This state would then deprive the American troops of any legitimacy to stay and Japan's sovereign right to engage in war will then be legalized. The Senkaku Islands thus registers an irrevocable agenda and a renewal of WHS. Hence, the agenda of Senkaku Islands is neither Chinese nor Western. The pursuit will not end until it succeeds or fails. In fact, right-wing politicians have visited the Yasukuni Shrine where war criminals are honored. The incessant series of morale boosting campaigns of this sort virtually constrains the Abe government from any sign of retreat. A losing move will take a very strong pressure from the U.S. or China. However, ironically, such a pressure, especially from China, can be exactly as desired to motivate the restoration of national defense and to increase the rise of Japan toward the momentum. If either the rise of China or the lingering US dominance defeats the use of the metaphor on the initial rise of Japan in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century over the Korean issue, opposite versions of Asianism will emerge in due time.

#### Taiwan and the Adoption of Double-worlding Strategy

Taiwan is an exceptional place to practice the philosophy of nothingness because of the country's uncertain and layered political history. Taiwan's political regimes, along with a population composed of generations of immigrants, have constantly changed, each moving forward from another high-performing regime established originally outside of the island. As historical Japan consciously floats between having European and Chinese characteristics, contemporary Taiwan floats consciously between having Chinese and Japanese characteristics and, after WWII, American characteristics as well. 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. Confucian and colonial Taiwanese intellectual Tsai Peihuo adopted from Japan's imperialism the notion of East Asia to resolve such an inner confrontation. In actuality, Taiwan was a devout and sincere practitioner of KSP, more than Japan. Proclaimed as the "son of East Asia" while remaining loyal to the Japanese Emperor, Tsai imagined Taiwan belonging to neither just Japan nor just China. Tsai's East Asian stance was by all means mimicry of WHS (Shih, 2011). Tsai was imprisoned by Japanese authorities for potential harm to the combative morale of the Japanese military, with his self-surrender to an identity of a nobody.

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 KSP is possible for the subaltern only. Subaltern people usually suffer from incapacity to change the world around them, but this incapacity can 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 knowledge.

By contrast, developing a stronger power such as Japan, which practices WHS, would be similar to constructing a civilizational bridge. When a strong disciple of 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 transformation of WHS. Japan undertook this mission during the war but did not find success in Taiwan that 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 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 continued during the Kuomintang takeover after WWII and then 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 their own Civil War agenda, and as a result, Taiwan did not become another Vietnam or another base of containment. Chiang Ching-kuo, the last Civil War leader, struggled to establish his own platform where the Cold War and the preparation for a post-Civil War coexisted. The Cold War was by confrontation, while the preparation for a post-Civil War was by imagination of restoration.

Similarly, post-colonial Taiwan had its own independent agenda that are unlike those of the ruling Kuomintang. Although the colonial worldview may have been suppressed under the Kuomintang rule, in reality Lee Tenghui was able to capitalize on the decline of the Kuomintang in accordance with a retrieved colonial platform (Huang Y. C., 2013). Lee was ready to revive colonial legacy after the conditions had matured even without his own contributions. 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 a compromise of hiding between the Kuomintang in China and the U.S. Cold War and between the post-colonials of Taiwan and Kuomintang's Civil War. The double hidden agendas empirically demonstrated the philosophy of nothingness. Worlding is the proper method to excavate these hidden agendas to recognize the agency that resist the consecutive rising power of the ruling regimes. The



first hidden agenda utilized U.S. Cold War resources for the purposes of Chiang Ching-kuo, in addition to the role assigned by the U.S. 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 on the world agenda, hence worldliness.

Taiwan's uncertain and layered political history prepares its residents to efficiently accept arriving regimes. Thus, the society does not intend to recollect politically incorrect history for its present time. Double-worlding serves two different generations of population, namely, one arriving before the end of the Japanese colonial rule and the other is arriving after. 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 worlding also provides a more sophisticated case of 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. Worlding is no longer a mere resistance to hegemony. Instead, 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 Worlding, are conscious of the existence of each other. The decision is about whether China is the hegemony to resist. The double 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 perceived 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, 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 an un-Chinese Taiwan. This worlding strategy is effectively revealed in Taiwan's initiative to establish a fishing pact with Japan. The initiative 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.

#### 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 conditions. They 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 non-utilization 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 BoR toward principles or values is in contrast with worlding in the sense that the worlding philosophy seeks to overcome the heavy dependence of the subaltern on hegemonic sanctioning of economic, political, and ideological partnerships. By presenting Taiwan's maneuvering of the U.S. partnership in its own battle with China, a worlding method for Taiwan brings to surface the subaltern's agency hidden in its mimicry of hegemonic discourse. Worlding is not in China's favor. Rather, BoR is a method 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. 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 relaxed synchronizing imposition to appease allies. The declining hegemony can include both those in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Chinese dynasty and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century US. All of them face an IR full of contradiction. To survive or to proceed, the nation should manage its uncertain environment by avoiding synchronizing relationships that proliferate in its expanding 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 over into Africa. 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 restrain 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 somewhat 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.

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 underwent significant change except during the rise of China that resulted in an identity puzzle forcing Japan to align either to the West or to the East. This idiosyncratic, internal puzzle compels Japan into choosing a 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 management. In East Asia, relationship management means that China has to cope with Taiwan that intensively asserts its worldliness, the U.S. that anxiously applies some synchronic values/institutions to co-opt China, and 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, as well as from the 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 multi-cultural 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, which is intended to rectify as the perceived inappropriate interventionary style of Chinese policy. Therefore, BoR requires China to treat liberalism inconsistently depending on who promotes it.

BoR serves as a bridge between PoP and Worlding because the power 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 to enhance the country's political correctness. In the same vein, the BoR of China can appease a worlding strategy of Taiwan by accommodating the asserted identity with some qualifications regarding the context. For example, China can concur to the sovereignty of Diaoyutai Islands with Taiwan's pledge, given that Taiwan willingly continues to represent China.

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, India, and Myanmar that China is ready to yield in the latter cases. China resorts to relationship management with those unfamiliar to the sovereign order. China uses a similar technique as that implemented in the South China Seas. Basically, China proposes joint ventures over disputed territorial seas or islands, with other parties of conflict being able to internally 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 Diaoyudao, China has engaged Japan's nationalization by patrolling the air and the sea around the island and by occasional approaching without landing the island as if the dispute requires no 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.

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

The Senkaku/Diaoyutai/Diaoyudao Islands has limited national interest implications regarding natural gas, which no one has already actualized. In avoiding the reoccurrence of disputes, joint ventures have been attempted and agreed upon. Therefore, no significant national interests are involved in the dispute. Geopolitics is a non-critical concern of the islands as other islands should have been. Consider that China has not shown any interest in obtaining the islands from the occupying 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 anti-China identity, which ironically was initially suppressed by Japanese colonialism. Finally, China's resort to ambiguity reflects the substitution of relationship for territorial sovereignty.

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 (2001) on confrontation during hegemonic transitions, as one of the most discussed systemic theories that anticipate the inevitability of confrontation between existing and rising powers. Liberal IR scholar Robert Keohane (1984) 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. A similar string of constructivist IR exists, as presented by Alexander Wendt (2003) who predicts that the system will move toward a world government from where major powers learn rationally together. 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 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 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. 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 BoR. Less influential nations will practically reinterpret hegemonic order to meet their otherwise inexpressible motivations.

Table I: The PoP Conditions of Identity

Synchronic	Yes	No
Multi-sited		
Yes	Philosophy of Place as Absolute nothingness	Worlding as Relative identity
No	Hegemonic Order as Absolute identity	Balance of Relationships as Relative nothingness

Source: The author

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