

International Theory: The Balance of Relationships

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International Theory: The Balance of Relationships // Chih-yu Shih et al. // Summary // Major IR theories, which assume that actors will inevitably only seek to enhance their own interests, tend to contrive binaries of self and 'inside' and 'outside'. By contrast, this book recognizes the general need of all to relate, which they do through various imagined resemblances between them. // The authors of this book therefore propose the 'balance of powers' (BoR) as a new international relations theory to transcend binary ways of thinking. BoR theory differs from mainstream IR theories owing to two key differences in its epistemological position. Firstly, the theory explains how states as socially-interrelated actors inescapably pursue a strategy of self-restraint in order to join a more stable and long-term relationships. Secondly, owing to its focus on explaining bilateral relations, BoR opposes rule-based governance. By positing 'relationality' as a key concept of Chinese international relations, this book shows that BoR can also serve as an important concept in the theorization of international relations more broadly. // The rising interest in developing a Chinese school of IR means the BoR theory will draw from students of IR theory, comparative foreign policy, Chinese foreign policy, East Asia, cultural studies, international IR, post-colonial studies and civilizational politics. // Table of Contents // Introduction: Relating China and International Relations // Part 1: Balance of Relationships // 1. Relationality vs. Power Politics 2. Relational Policy 3. Relational Policy of Major Powers // Part 2: Philosophical Resources // 4. Relational Ontology 5. The State of Nature 6. Cyclical Perspective on History // Part 3. Processes of BoR // 7. Cultural Memory 8. Political Efficacy 9. Institutional Style // Part 4. Identities of the Theory // 10. Plausible Post-Western Theory 11. The Chinese Theory 12. Plausible Western Theory // In Lieu of Conclusion. Four Caveats // Preface // Introduction: development of the balance of relationships (BoR) as simultaneously a theory undergirding an international system and a strategic agency, we face the challenge of engaging in and contributing to two major tasks at the same time—international relations theory in general and the relational turn in particular. Further complicating this challenge is the fact that the second dialogue involves a readership across the Anglosphere and the Chinese, with both spheres similarly focusing on why and how relations are necessary in international relations in different cultural backgrounds. In this light, our intention is for our theory to transcend the familiar binaries of 'the West, great and small powers, rationality and relationality, as well as those reflecting political rivalries. In essence, our prime purpose is to illustrate how Chinese intellectual resources can enhance the understanding of international relations and foreign policy practices everywhere. Through doing so, we hope to tackle the misreading and reconstruction of Chinese international relations. Consequently, our writing seeks to construct bridges across incongruent epistemological traditions. // This book accordingly offers a composite agenda comparing and contrasting relational imaginations of different kinds through the notion of the balance of relationships. We have opted mainly on unpacking the concepts, ideas and epistemology that undergird BoR theory. Thus, we took out case chapters. Nevertheless, we rely on examples to scope out its potential application to make sense of phenomena that familiar IR theories struggle to explain. Such a double-headed mission complicates not only writing but also the coordination among authors. I am grateful to my eight younger colleagues who fearlessly join the collective writing of this book, which trespasses multiple fields and critically moves outside familiar thinking. Our professional teaching spreads over the disciplines of political science, postcolonial studies,

periods respectively in our careers. All these factors meant parallel and long processes of negotiation and
on. However, as the existence of this work now shows, in the end we managed to merge all these diverse
es together and establish our own balance of relationships among ourselves. /// We realize that it is
ional to have nine coauthors as opposed to nine authors of separate chapters. I rather enjoyed the
of cooperation and coordination, however. As I have always initiated the idea and the writing of a chapter,
ors joined at different points upon my invitation and yet inevitably contributed across the writing of different
We interacted intensively. At least four of us participated in finalizing all chapters. Relying on our other
ve projects or workshops, I was able to improvise meetings with coauthors every once in a while over the
ears. The major sponsor for the writing of the book was nevertheless a three-year writing grant I received
inistry of Science and Technology of Taiwan from 2014 through 2017. A few summer and winter camps
y contrived to introduce the balance of relationships to younger generations were organized in the Center of
ial China Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the Division of Area Studies at the
of Tokyo, the Department of Political Science of National Taiwan University, and the Institute of
ial Relations of Shanghai Tongji University. With the support of the editors of the Worlding the West Series
ge and the publication of this book, we wish to engender likewise passion in the Anglosphere to reflect
a and international theory in even more comprehensive and sophisticated ways. /// Chih-yu Shih ///
Bio /// Chih-yu Shih, the primary author of this book, teaches international relations theory, anthropology of
e, and cultural studies as National Chair Professor and University Chair Professor at National Taiwan
Access to his current research—Intellectual History of China and Chinese Studies—is at <http://www.china-pei/>
Together, his writings on IR theory, intellectual history, and ethnic citizenship challenge familiar social
nd humanity categories. /// His co-authors—Chiung-chiu Huang (National Cheng-chi University), Pichamon
ng (University of New South Wales, Canberra), Raoul Bunskoek (National Taiwan University), Josuke
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, Chih-yun Chang (Shanghai Jiaotong University), and Ching-chang Chen (Ryukoku University)—have all
critically on Asia in IR in general and on China, Japan, Taiwan and ASEAN in specific. They have come
r other through different joint projects involving critical IR, post-Western IR, homegrown IR, global IR, Asian
inese IR. Their careers include professional posts in India, Germany, Thailand, Japan, the US, Taiwan, the
Js, Australia, and China. /// Chiung-chiu Huang is Associate Professor at the Graduate Institute of East
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“The authors generate a novel ‘balance of relationships’ theory of international relations grounded in practice, self-restraint and bilaterality. BoR should help US decision makers better understand their Chinese counterparts, but the theory is also usefully presented as a general resource available to all states that choose to adopt a relational foreign policy.”

— **Cameron G. Thies**, *Arizona State University, USA*

“This book courageously establishes an innovative theory that is conceptually and culturally different from existing Western theories of international relations. It also provides appealing reinterpretations of the relationships between China and the United States and between mainland China and Taiwan.”

— **Wang Jisi**, *Peking University, China*

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western Europe and North America in terms already familiar to the mainstream: as a new ‘ism,’ as support for one or another existing school of IR thought, or as a completely distinct way of thinking about international affairs that serves as a comprehensive rival. This book avoids that temptation, producing instead a detailed engagement with dominant Anglophone IR that is grounded in the Confucian heritage, foregrounding ‘improvised resemblance’ as a foreign policy strategy that doesn’t fit neatly of the existing categories that Anglophone IR thinking provides. The result is a bit disquieting, but for a profound purpose: to explore the tissues of resemblance and distinction between so-called ‘Chinese’ and ‘Western’ IR, and to perhaps afford us a better grasp of both.”

— **Patrick Thaddeus Jackson**, *American University, USA*

China and International Theory

Major IR theories, which stress that actors will inevitably only seek to enhance their own interests, tend to contrive binaries of self and other and ‘inside’ and ‘outside’. By contrast, this book recognizes the general need of all to relate, which they do through various imagined resemblances between them.

The authors of this book therefore propose the ‘balance of relationships’ (BoR) as a new international relations theory to transcend binary ways of thinking. BoR theory differs from mainstream IR theories owing to two key differences in its epistemological position. Firstly, the theory explains why and how states as socially-interrelated actors inescapably pursue a strategy of self-restraint in order to join a network of stable and long-term relationships. Secondly, owing to its focus on explaining bilateral relations, BoR theory bypasses rule-based governance. By positing ‘relationality’ as a key concept of Chinese international relations, this book shows that BoR can also serve as an important concept in the theorization of international relations, more broadly.

The rising interest in developing a Chinese school of IR means the BoR theory will draw attention from students of IR theory, comparative foreign policy, Chinese foreign policy, East Asia, cultural studies, post-Western IR, post-colonial studies and civilizational politics.

Chih-yu Shih, the primary author of this book, teaches international rela-

nese Studies—can be found at <http://www.china-studies.taipei/> Together, his writings on IR theory, intellectual history, and ethnic citizenship challenge familiar social science and humanity categories. His co-authors—Chiung-chiu Huang (National Cheng-chi University), Pichamon Yeophantong (University of New South Wales, Canberra), Raoul Bunskoek (National Taiwan University), Josuke Ikeda (Toyama University), Yih Jye Hwang (Leiden University), Hung-jen Wang (National Cheng-Kung University), Chih-yun Chang (Shanghai Jiaotong University), and Ching-chang Chen (Ryukoku

University)—have all published critically on Asia in IR in general and on China, Japan, Taiwan and ASEAN in specific. They have come across each other through different joint projects involving critical IR, post-Western IR, homegrown IR, global IR, Asian IR and Chinese IR. Their careers include professional posts in India, Germany, Thailand, Japan, the US, Taiwan, the Netherlands, Australia, and China.

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January 2010

Zhansui Yu

Chinese, following Chairman Mao's famous phrase, tend to use the expression "like a fire burning in the wilderness" [燎原之火 liaoyuan zhi huo] to describe the unexpected rise and popularity of something marginalized or rebellious. Since the literary explosion in the years immediately after Mao's death, mainland Chinese literary circles have rarely witnessed such a "wild fire." Recently, however, a ... [\[Show full abstract\]](#)

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Maimuna Islam

In Pluralist Universalism, Wen Jin offers an intricate comparative transnational study of the historical and political trajectories in multiculturalism policies in China and the US predominantly through representations of ethnic minorities in fiction from both nations and from hyphenated authors who straddle multiple cultures and countries. Along the way, Jin also traverses academic ... [\[Show full abstract\]](#)

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June 2008

Daniel A. Bell

I am a big fan of Jonathan Spence's works. His books bring to life some of the great and not-so-famous characters in Chinese history and they read like novels. When I was told that he had delivered a lecture on "Confucian Ways" for the BBC, I was very curious, and clicked on the link with great anticipation. Unfortunately, I couldn't figure out how to download the programme here in Beijing, but I ... [\[Show full abstract\]](#)

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April 2010

Samuel Y. Liang

On my way from England to AAS 2010, I stopped in New York for two nights and visited the Chinatown in Manhattan. This prosperous area sprawls beyond the boundary shown in the tourist map towards the shoreline of the East River; it also encroaches on neighboring Little Italy, which is increasingly like an island in a sea of Chinese shops and restaurants. The density of the shops and their gaudy ... [\[Show full abstract\]](#)

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