

Confronting China in an Asymmetric Relationship: The Case of Peace Efficacy in Taiwan

Chih-yu Shih

Abstract

This study seeks to explain how a weaker party could decide on its own to confront a stronger party. The weaker party relies on relational turn in international relations to provide an alternative to the realist view. On the basis of relational turn, which stresses the importance of discovering the processual mechanisms of behavior instead of the structure or corelationship among variables, this study offers an empirically based speculation of the plausible psychological mechanisms that enable a weaker party in Taiwan to resort to confrontation against a stronger party in China. These psychological mechanisms are arguably necessary processes that lead to confrontational policy. This study argues that a small party is epistemologically equal to its stronger counterpart in relational coupling. This assumption is based on prior understandings that constitute the identities of both parties. The former exerts agency for confrontation when acting upon the senses of efficacy, determination, and/or legitimacy that are embedded in relational coupling.

North Korean Leader Kim Jung Un executed his uncle Jang Song-thaek for treason on 13 December 2013. The execution was conducted in the most theatrical fashion and was seemingly designed for the entire world to see. Jang was a top-ranking pro-China veteran who believed in the Chinese style of reform. A year before, Jang was still collaborating with

Chih-yu Shih is Professor of Political Science in National Taiwan University. Correspondence should be sent to cyshih@ntu.edu.tw.