Abstracts

"Frequent Vows, Escalating Disorder": The Origin and Decline of Alliances Under International Hierarchy in China's Spring and Autumn Period

Meng Ke　Dong Qiyuan　(2)

【Abstract】Neoclassical realism underscores the significance of studying alliances through the "second image" pathway but falls short in investigating internal contradictions within state ruling groups that influence alliance decisions. To address this gap, this article draws on the selectorate theory to explore how domestic political struggles among leaders and winning coalition members shape a state's external alliance policy. Through historical analysis of alliance records from China's Spring and Autumn Period, we find that aristocratic officials (qingdafu), as members of winning alliances within feudal states, were compelled to ally with larger powers to ensure political survival amid domestic power struggles. This preference for alliances diverged from rulers who resisted affiliating with dominant states under the hierarchical system. As a result, internal political contestations initiated by aristocrats against rulers or colleagues significantly impacted the decision-making of the state in forming alliances. The expansion of political power among aristocratic officials drove the state to participate in more alliances, especially with more powerful states posing substantial military threats. Conversely, when aristocrats' political power surpassed a critical threshold, granting them a decisive advantage in domestic struggles, the impetus for external alliances diminished, resulting in reduced alliance formations with other states. Empirical tests using an original dyad dataset of alliances among China's Spring and Autumn Period feudal states support the proposed hypotheses, contributing to our understanding of how domestic political struggles shape inter-state alliance behavior.

【Key Words】international hierarchy, interstate alliance, selectorate theory, winning coalition, Spring and Autumn Period

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Chinese Foreign Aid and National Identity in Recipient Countries: Evidence from the Tanzania-Zambia Railway

Huang Zhenqian (29)

【Abstract】China has provided considerable foreign aid to the national liberation movements and the national construction of developing countries. Still, there is little research on the impact of these aid projects on the national construction of recipient countries. By constructing a new theoretical framework that integrates time and space, the author proposes that China's infrastructure aid to developing countries has a role in promoting the nation-building of recipient countries. National identity can be a key entry point to examine foreign aid and nation-building. The author takes the Tanzania-Zambia Railway, China's most representative foreign aid project, as a case and uses the spatial analysis method to match and analyze the national identity of local people and the railway. The railway shaped national identity by promoting development and enhancing collective memory. And the effect of railway construction on national identity is most significant among the people who live in areas along the railway and have experienced railway construction. At the same time, the impact of the railway on local national identity is also gradually weakening. In contrast, the railways built by the colonial master during the colonial period did not enhance the national identity. This study expands the theoretical understanding of the impact of foreign aid, unearths China's contribution to the national liberation in developing countries, and has implications for improving China's international development cooperation policy.

【Key Words】Chinese foreign aid, Tanzania-Zambia Railway, nation-building, collective memory, national identity

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Rhetorical Strategy Adaptation in Norm Contestation：The Case of the Responsibility to Protect

Chen Zheng　（60）

【Abstract】 Existing studies of international norm contestations have produced different and even contradictory judgments and explanations on whether contestations weaken or strengthen norms. This is largely due to a lack of attention to the strategic agency of actors and a neglect of the influence of norms' evolution stage on the practices of contestations. Engaging in contestations, actors can adapt to specific political and normative contexts and can modify rhetorical strategies to defend their positions and shape normative evolution. How do actors adapt rhetorical strategies to shape international norms? This article suggests that normative arguments have two basic elements, namely normative frameworks and policy claims. It then identifies three broad categories of rhetorical strategies based on where the focus of arguments with the opponent is directed, namely application, avoidance, and resistance, while specific strategic forms include restriction, extension, counter-use, avoidance, labeling, ignoring, replacement, detachment, and confrontation. During norms' evolution, actors may adopt different rhetorical strategies for same or similar goals, while different rhetorical strategies may achieve same effect and same rhetorical strategies may have different effects. The degree of consensus on value principles and the clarity of the behavioral rules of certain norms are important drivers behind the emergence of different rhetorical strategies. Along with the evolution of the norms themselves, actors with the same or similar goals may adopt different rhetorical strategies at different occasions. To make this argument, this article traces the rhetorical responses of China and other BRICS countries in the evolution of R2P, which fully demonstrates the adaptation and influence of argumentative strategies on the evolution of norms. The analysis of the adaptation of rhetorical strategies reveals the crux of the current academic controversies and highlights the contingent and dynamic relationship between norm contestation and norm evolution.

【Key Words】 norm contestation, norm evolution, strategies of norm contestation, rhetorical strategy adaptation, responsibility to protect

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Research on the Performance of Digital Economy Governance from the Perspective of Integrating Development and Security

Lang Ping Lang Kun （87）

【Abstract】The key to digital economy governance is to balance the goals of both development and security. Based on the theoretical framework of the Theoretical Outline for National Security Studies for the New Era and the characteristics of the digital economy, the authors classify digital economy governance into four scenarios, namely, the benchmark scenario, the dependent cooperation scenario, the great power competition scenario, and the shared governance scenario. The authors analyze and compare the performance of representative countries in integrating development and security under different scenarios, and find that （1） in the benchmark scenario, representative countries' investment in digital security should stop at the equilibrium security level; （2） in the dependent cooperation scenario, a "center-periphery" digital hegemony system will be formed, which will solidify and exacerbate the inequality in the development of the digital economy; （3） the great power competition scenario may lead to the dilemma of "digital security race"; （4） the shared governance scenario helps to achieve the goal of maximizing total welfare. Further, by analyzing the EU digital economy governance model, the US-Japan digital economy cooperation model, and the Sino-US digital competition model, the authors find that all the three digital economy governance models result in certain welfare losses. China's initiative of building a community of shared future in cyberspace can give full play to the role of technology, data and security as public goods, promote cooperation among countries, and help achieve a dynamic balance between high-quality development and high-level security in the global digital economy.

【Key Words】digital economy governance, integrating development and security, global digital cooperation, a holistic approach to national security, a community of shared future in cyberspace

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IR Theoretical Contributions：Concepts，Categories and Levels
Lu Lingyu （109）

【Abstract】 International relations theory can be evaluated at two levels. Whereas the first level relates to the presence or absence of theoretical contributions，the second gauges the size of a contribution. Theoretical breakthroughs at the first level may be empirically driven or theoretically integrated，or take the form of new concepts or description of new events or phenomena. At the second level，IR theoretical contributions consist of intra- and inter- paradigmatic innovations. For the former，ceteris paribus，the larger the number of independent variables，the smaller the extension of a theory，along with a smaller marginal contribution. Where a theory entails merely one explanatory variable，its marginal contribution rests on the spatial and temporal content of the variable. On the other hand，inter-paradigmatic innovations consist of two categories. Under the first subtype，IR theories，which are characterized by identical outcome variable and differential assumptions，can be gauged in terms of the timing of publication and the richness of their connotations. The second subtype theories differ both in the dependent variable and underlying assumptions. Such theories are non-comparable in principle. As an alternative，we can attempt to infer the relative importance of IR theories by comparing the "importance" of their outcome variables，whose principal indicator is social "fundamentalness". The frame of reference for evaluation is not individual hunch or insight but the professional literature. That "the theory is well-known" reflects the excellent question awareness of an evaluator，as well as the potential large contribution of a theory，but is not in itself a scientific yardstick for IR theory evaluation.

【Key Words】 IR theory，theoretical contributions，method innovation，IR disciplinary construction

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Reflections on the Paradigm and Core of Realism

Song Wei （143）

【Abstract】Some basic issues of realism in International Relations theory still need clarification and reflection. First，regarding the paradigm of realism，realists believe that states may pursue interests such as security，power，and economic development，but not always prioritize security or power. When states don't face urgent security threats，they can seek other objectives；moreover，many states could not afford the pursuit of power as their main goal. In the eyes of most realists，human nature may not necessarily be evil for it is not measurable，and the international relations may not necessarily be conflictive. Realist theory is not just a theory used to explain international conflicts. Some elements lead to conflict in some forms，while they promote cooperation in others. Though realism believes that the capability structure is more important than factors such as institution，morality，and identity，it does not mean that the latter is not important. Second，the core of realism theory，namely Structural Realism，is a theory of international relations，with the main explanatory objective being the stability of the international system rather than the behavior of states. It can well explain the end of the Cold War and partially explain the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The quantitative changes of the international structure continue to occur，but qualitative changes are relatively difficult to take place，and both quantitative and qualitative changes in the international structure can have significant impacts on relations among nations. The emergence of nuclear weapons has strengthened the stability of the bipolar structure，but it is not a variable beyond the importance of structure. Finally，realist theory is both interpretive and normative，and does not exclude moral foreign policy. Only based on an understanding of reality can we effectively safeguard national interests and international peace.

【Key Words】international relations theory，realism，theoretical paradigm，theoretical core，international structure

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