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RSCAS 2016/44
Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies
BORDERLANDS Project

The Borderlands Concept and its Application to China's
relations with its Asian Neighbours

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EUI Working Paper **RSCAS** 2016/44

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ISSN 1028-3625

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Printed in Italy, August 2016

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Badia Fiesolana

I – 50014 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)

Italy

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BORDERLANDS: Boundaries, Governance and Power in the European Union's Relations with North Africa and the Middle East

Challenging the notion of Fortress Europe, the BORDERLANDS research project investigates relations between the European Union and the states of North Africa and the Mediterranean Middle East (MENA) through the concept of borderlands. This concept emphasises the disaggregation of the triple function of borders demarcating state territory, authority, and national identity inherent in the Westphalian model of statehood. The project explores the complex and differentiated process by which the EU extends its unbundled functional and legal borders and exports its rules and practices to MENA states, thereby transforming that area into borderlands. They are connected to the European core through various border regimes, governance patterns, and the selective outsourcing of some EU border control duties.

The overarching questions informing this research is whether, first, the borderland policies of the EU, described by some as a neo-medieval empire, is a functional consequence of the specific integration model pursued inside the EU, a matter of foreign policy choice or a local manifestation of a broader global phenomenon. Second, the project addresses the political and socio-economic implications of these processes for the 'borderlands', along with the questions of power dynamics and complex interdependence in EU-MENA relations.

Funded by the European Research Council (ERC) within the 7th Framework Programme, the BORDERLANDS project is hosted at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, and directed by Professor Raffaella A. Del Sarto.

For more information: <http://borderlands-project.eu/Home.aspx>



European Research Council
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Abstract

In deploying the concept of borderlands to the case of China, this paper seeks to uncover patterns in Chinese behaviour towards its Asian neighbours. It provides a brief examination of China's imperial as well as post-imperial relations with Asian states. In its focus on imperial China, it suggests the impact of tributary relationships and of a Confucian order at times of Chinese imperial strength as well as imperial weakness. It also investigates some areas of contested or incomplete sovereignty in the more modern and contemporary eras, notably with respect to Xinjiang, Taiwan and Hong Kong. The paper additionally examines some instances of Chinese penetration into weakly-governed border regions – with Myanmar forming the main focus of discussion. The concept is deployed in ways that highlight instances of emulation, processes of assimilation, forms of control, and types of resistance in China's borderland relations. China has had a powerful historical influence in the borderlands, mostly in the cultural realm, but in the northern reaches has not been loath to use force and settlement to effect the incorporation of these territories. In more contemporary times, economics rather than culture is seen to underpin Chinese influence, though the leadership has tried to develop its 'soft power' attractions. Beijing has also shown a willingness to use the tools of statecraft to impose preferred outcomes, but has not been entirely successful in reconstituting the borderlands through these efforts despite its economic power and growing military prowess.

Keywords:

Chinese borderlands, Imperial China, 'One Belt, One Road', Xinjiang, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Myanmar.

Introduction*

The concept of borderlands has been applied both to a geographical space -- the border areas abutting two internationally recognized states -- and as a methodology that explores objectives and outcomes in this geographically-determined area (DuVal 2010). The concept challenges a strict Westphalian view of sovereignty as a state's exclusive control over peoples within a legally-defined territory, and instead encourages reflection on the experience of fluidity, hybridity, and transnationalism in land as well as sea territories that adjoin each other. Writings in International Relations on transnationalism, in particular those that focus on patterns of integration, economic and security regionalization or regionalism, and on questions of identity that do not correspond with legally-demarcated borders, have challenged the idea that we can think of territory and borders as defining a discrete political community within a recognized and legally separated geographical space.

Borderlands, then, are conceived as hybrid and fluid spaces where there is the potential for the shared exercise of power and the enhancement of similarity rather than difference. Borderlands can encompass a variety of legal and illegal behaviour. There may well be formal trade rules and agreed forms of trans-border governance, but these spaces may also involve drug and weapons smuggling, people trafficking, as well as provide routes for illegal migration. They may contain some deep forms of integration involving identity, economic exchange, compatible legal regimes, but also less dense forms of interaction not necessarily legally sanctioned by central governments. There may be acceptance on the part of neighbouring societies of the formal rules that apply to these spaces, or these border relations may generate resistance on the part of one or more actors bound into these spaces in between.

Those who have adopted the borderlands concept in reference to the European Union (EU) and its relations with its Middle Eastern and North African neighbours across the Mediterranean sea have focused on the EU desire to export or more negatively to impose its laws and governance patterns on its southern borderlands (e.g. Del Sarto 2014). They argue that neighbouring countries have been required, persuaded or induced through either positive or negative incentives to adopt legislation and behaviour that reflects the regulatory environment predominant in the EU in certain functional areas. These arrangements may serve to reconstitute the borderland states and societies in ways that they broadly accept or in ways that generate resistance and resentment.

This paper investigates how this concept of borderlands may be deployed in reference to China and through adoption of this lens seeks to uncover some of the patterns in Chinese behaviour towards its Asian neighbours. The paper suggests, too, that borderland outcomes and borderland policies have the potential to transform those areas beyond the immediately contiguous space. The paper investigates these ideas via brief examination of China's pre-modern as well as its contemporary relations, investigates some areas of contested or incomplete sovereignty, and references a few instances of Chinese penetration into border regions where domestic governance mechanisms are weakly established.

China is a particularly interesting case to consider for four main reasons. First, since the break up of the former Soviet Union, the Chinese state has land borders with 14 countries as well as several sea borders including those with important US allies such as Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the Philippines, as well as with Taiwan -- once a formal US ally and still supported in various ways by the United States. Indeed, China has the longest land borders in the world (about 14,000 miles) and when the CCP came to power in 1949 many of these boundaries needed to be formally delineated. Several

* A first draft of this paper was presented at the Borderlands project final conference, organized by Professor Raffaella A. Del Sarto, 20-21 June 2016. I am grateful to Professor Del Sarto for her invitation to participate in this event and to Professor Daniel C Bach for his constructive comments on my draft paper.

sea borders in the East and South China seas remain contested, though all but two of the land borders have been agreed. The exceptions involve the important China-India border and the border with Bhutan. As Taylor Fravel has noted, China's ethnic geography reflects a 'core-periphery structure' (2008: 41); thus, ethnic minorities are present in these land-border regions and in the past, if not also in the contemporary era, their presence has raised issues of control and loyalty for the central state. Fravel reminds us that 'of the 135 [Chinese] counties adjacent to China's international frontiers, 107 are ethnic autonomous regions' (Fravel 2005: 60, note 40). Over the years and particularly during the Cold War period, China has chosen to compromise on many of these territorial disputes especially at times when unrest in these ethnic regions threatened the security of the People's Republic of China (PRC) regime (Fravel 2008).

Second, some "border" areas associated with the PRC have an ambiguous status: they are viewed by the Beijing government as a part of China, but are not, as yet, under full legal Chinese control. This is particularly pertinent in reference to the de facto independent state of Taiwan, which China and most other countries in the international system regard as a part of China. Also of interest is the status of Hong Kong, which has been designated as a Special Autonomous Region until 2047 and governed by a Basic Law. From 2047 it will be fully part of the Chinese state. In the meantime, it is under a formulation known as the 'one country, two systems' arrangement, originally a formulation devised in Beijing to deal with Taiwan, but actually implemented in Hong Kong.

Third, when once China was an empire and perceived as the Middle Kingdom ruling over 'all under heaven', from the 20th century China became associated strongly with a strict Westphalian view of sovereignty. From that time, it constantly has reiterated the need for non-interference in internal affairs, the sovereign equality of nations, the value of pluralism in world politics as a world order principle, and belief in mutual respect for the diversity of civilizations.

Finally, and somewhat paradoxically given what has been said about contemporary Chinese official views of sovereignty, Beijing has established a number of important and sometimes quite dense cross-border and global links. Especially since the 'Reform and Opening era' launched in late 1978, China has obtained membership in most international and regional multilateral organizations, and it has become central to global and regional production chains operating in the Asia-Pacific that tie that region to the developed markets in the West. The share of network trade in the Asia-Pacific region is much higher than in other world regions and China is more heavily engaged in these networks than other countries, often acting as the point of final assembly for a range of goods that are susceptible to being sliced up in various ways in the production chain. Disruption of these cross-border ties that involve firms in selected parts of a production process suggest a range of economic interests that would work to pressurize governments to maintain stability and predictability in transnational relations (Athurokala, 2010; Ravenhill, 2014). More importantly for our purposes, they suggest a more fluid relationship between geographically contiguous states.

Not all of these instances of China's borderland involvements will be discussed in what follows. However, the concept will be deployed in ways that highlight borderland behaviour and policy including emulation, assimilation, forms of control, and forms of resistance in China's borderland relations.

Imperial China and the Tributary System

China's imperial system in particular demonstrates many of the features we associate with the borderlands concept, especially those that comprise a desire to mould neighbouring societies in ways that emulate the more powerful actor.

Imperial tradition dictated the prime goals of the emperor to be "to preside over a stable and harmonious order" and to overawe all others when they beheld the fruits of that enviable order—in the economy, the arts, and philosophy (Shue (2004: 31). Particularly during the Ming and Qing imperial

eras, Chinese culture and politics strongly influenced its neighbours, particularly the inner Asian zone of Korea, Vietnam, the Ryukyus and Japan (there were three zones in all radiating from the imperial Chinese Middle Kingdom, with the inner zone being most strongly influenced). We could conceive of this as a form of hierarchical transnationalism.

Emulation, particularly of cultural forms, was the most important behavioural trait to emerge. Emulation suggested recognition of Chinese superiority, as did the paying of tribute and the ceremony of kowtowing to the Chinese emperor - the so-called Son of Heaven. In exchange, the Chinese were expected to provide security, and engage in commerce. Providing the necessary rituals were performed these vassal kingdoms could be left mostly alone. They were recognized as secondary states ruled by Kings who had been given recognition as kingdoms by the Chinese emperor through an investiture ceremony. Notably, however, the Japanese retained their own emperor system, one of several examples of resistance to the Chinese imperial order, especially at times of imperial weakness (see below).

Emulation was particularly notable in cultural and political institutional areas, several of which are important for their longer-term consequences. As David Kang (2007: esp pp.43-46) has noted:

- neither the Japanese nor Korean languages are Sinic in origin, but they use Chinese characters to this day for certain forms of formal communication. This is so for Vietnam too.
- All three of these designated members of the Inner Zone adopted the bureaucratic systems developed in China. Government bureaucrats were selected by an examination system modeled on China's and which emphasized knowledge of Chinese classics, culture and philosophy.
- Korea's Choson dynasty (1391-1910) adopted court dress identical with that of Ming officials; Japan's capital city of Kyoto was modeled after that of China's Tang dynasty capital.
- The Vietnamese acknowledged Chinese suzerainty, accepted the tribute system, and called themselves "Kings" when communicating with the Chinese. As a mild form of resistance, they used the term "emperor" with their own subjects or Southeast Asian rulers (Kang in Buzan and Zhang, eds., 2015 p. 78).

The tributary system was central to the organization of imperial China's diplomatic relations. Kang describes that system as a "set of institutional structures that provided an overarching framework for organizing external relations among political actors in early modern East Asia. A set of rules and institutions developed over time that regulated foreign diplomatic relations, social and economic interaction, and provided a clear sense of order to the system" (Kang, 2010, p. 81; see also Khong, 2013; Zhang, 2015).

Confucian values underpinned the system at its height. A successful emperor embodied the values of virtue, right conduct, and compassion and would win the admiration of outsiders/barbarians. The "outsider" would be willing to assimilate or emulate Chinese practices under these conditions, and mostly they did. Even Manchu and Mongol invaders, for example, when they became "insiders" took on Sinic rituals and traditions.

Resistance to the Confucian Order and the breakdown of Sino-centrism

At times of weakness, the imperial system would be challenged and even ignored. Sino-Japanese relations were, for example, more equal than this depiction so far implies. Japanese resistance dates back to the late 16th century when Japan challenged the Sino-centric regional order by launching the Imjin War against Korea and China (1592-98). After the mid nineteenth century Japan formerly took itself outside of the Sinic order and in the Meiji Restoration consciously adopted the norms and practices of Western international society. Distancing culminated in the first Sino-Japanese war of 1894-95 which demonstrated forcefully the Qing empire's decline and a long period of encroachment by colonial powers. Korea, once a tributary of China, was occupied by Japan in 1910, and did not

regain independence until 1945 (Goh, 2014, pp.159-160); the island of Taiwan became a Japanese possession from 1895 to 1945. China's move from empire to semi-colony, together with European and Japanese colonial interventions elsewhere in Asia, resulted in later adoption of and strong attachment to Westphalian ideas as a form of protection (the legal equality of patently unequal states). With these moves, China lost its place as 'middle kingdom' and place of superiority. Confucianism and its notions of hierarchy were displaced.

Fravel similarly records some of the implications of the rise and fall of the Qing Empire that lasted from 1644-1912 (2008, pp. 42-51). As he notes, at its height, the Qing controlled more than 13 million square kilometres, almost twice that of its imperial predecessor, the Ming dynasty. Areas brought under Qing control included Mongolia, Manchuria, parts of present-day Central Asia, the Russian Far East and Burma. It also incorporated Xinjiang, in China's Northwest. China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region as it is known, is a borderland, or more accurately a frontier, province that required an "ethnic frontier governing mechanism" before it could be incorporated (Zhu and Blackford, 2016). Qing policies in this frontier era involved coercion mixed with incentives and the settlement of Han peoples to subdue and incorporate the territory otherwise dominated by Uighur peoples of Turkic origin spread across Central Asia. Matthew Longo (forthcoming) writing of China's northern border areas more generally notes that the Qing developed "extensive tributary systems to co-opt nomadic peoples at their frontiers; a related tactic to the same effect was settlement. Qing leaders aggressively settled people beyond their boundaries". The idea was to turn these zones into regulated areas in which nomads became static residents – that is, farmers, traders, and soldiers for hire rather than peripatetic hunters.

However, in the last 100 years of the Qing dynasty its control over territories weakened significantly and the empire shrank some 25 percent. European and Japanese imperial encroachment, especially on the eastern seaboard, included the establishment of zones of extraterritoriality, as well as spheres of influence. China emerged as a semi-colony with patchy control over its borderlands. Soviet influence in Xinjiang during the Chinese Republican era (1912-1949) resulted in strong Chinese warlord links with Moscow, much firmer than their links with the then Chinese capital of Nanjing.

Thus, Xinjiang has played various roles over the centuries: as a semi-detached area; a strategic buffer zone; a vital imperial possession; and now as an integral part of the Chinese state which Beijing claims needs to be protected from separatist ideas and religious and terrorist extremism. China in the late 20th/early 21st Centuries uses oppression, economic largesse, and the relationship with members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization involving Central Asian neighbouring states together with Russia to guarantee Xinjiang's future as a part of the Chinese state. Han settlement from earlier periods has actually diluted the prospects for a separate "Eastern Turkestan" but this has not much reduced Beijing's fears about unrest in that region turning into a full-blown quest for independence. In addition, China has worked to persuade governments in the West and elsewhere to recognize the "East Turkestan Islamic Movement" as a terrorist organization subject to sanctions and boycotts.

The Modern Day Revival of Confucianism.

This rich if sometimes troubling historical experience has been drawn upon in various ways by the country's ruling elites when contemplating borderland relations in the contemporary era. For example, over the last few years, there has been a revival of interest in China in Confucianism. This has led to an emphasis on the so-called glories of China's Confucian past, the harmonious world that strong Chinese empires had allegedly brought into being, and the protection of "all under heaven" (*Tianxia*) that it had offered. Professor Yan Xuetong of Tsinghua University, for example, has been prominent in emphasizing the need for China to recapture a "humane authority" so that it can lead by example in the contemporary era.

President Xi Jinping has introduced a signature policy, now labeled 'One Belt, One Road' (OBOR), that also revives the idea of an integrated harmonious past and that emphasizes connectivity through the borderlands for the future. He has revived the idea (from the Tang dynasty) of a Silk Road Economic Belt, linking China with West and South Asia, onto Europe, and a Maritime Silk Road tying together the countries of Southeast, South Asia, Africa and Europe. These ties are to be made through infrastructure developments such as ports, railways, roads, oil and gas pipelines, as well as via telecommunications networks. Finance from the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is to underpin this ambitious project, as are specially created bilateral finance mechanisms. The OBOR initiative is generating a great deal of discussion and interest in the region and beyond, as well as some unease (Johnson 2016; Zhao 2016).

Should this be viewed as a neo-Confucian China-centred network of relations tying some 65 countries together economically, culturally and in security terms? Xi's speeches on this and on regional relations (the Asian 'periphery' as it is called) have emphasized "shared beliefs and norms of conduct for the whole region", "Asia for Asians", "shared destiny." But some neighbouring states are wary, seeing in these developments the possible reconstitution of a Sino-centric hierarchical order where Chinese values (or China's own developmental experience and its associated political-economic values) are seen as the region's organizing principle. The debate is on as to how to derive benefit from the needed infrastructure investments while not being subjected to an overwhelming Chinese presence (as was the case in Myanmar before its recent reform efforts, as is the case in Cambodia and Laos today.)

India, for example, is interested in developing its Northeast and China has been stressing the need to further develop its Southwest. Both sides have made some attempt to define their borderlands as bridges not as barriers between the two states, using the transformational power of trade, tourism and transport linkages. There are clear synergies here therefore (see Nimmi Kurian, 2014). However, India is concerned that the infrastructure developments would be all too useful for the Chinese armed forces at time of war. It also frets at the Chinese development of ports in Pakistan that will facilitate Chinese naval access to the Indian Ocean. In July 2016, it moved 100 tanks into the border area as part of a steady effort to counter what it perceives as increased Chinese militarization. Thus, it is proving difficult to make progress on this vision of border as bridge rather than as a place of legal separation requiring a hardening of the boundary.

That vision of border as bridge is also undercut by examples elsewhere of the implications of dependence on China. Such dependence, particularly economic dependence, has generated in one recent instance – that of Myanmar -- sufficient discomfort to bring about significant political change that has gone against Chinese interests. In the cases of incomplete sovereignty mentioned earlier and involving that of Hong Kong and Taiwan, we see other forms of resistance including the development of an identity separate from that of the mainland. I deal first with the case of Myanmar before turning briefly to a discussion of Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Modern Day Coercion and Leverage: Myanmar

Chinese economic, diplomatic and military influence in Myanmar grew rapidly from the start of the SLORC (the State Law and Order Restoration Council) period of Burmese military rule in 1988. Though both sides proclaimed those ties were based on a special "kinship" this was a relationship borne out of necessity (Chow and Easley, 2015; Goh and Steinberg, 2016).

China provided political protection from an 'international community' ready to condemn and sanction the military junta for its overthrow of a democratically elected government as well as for its abusive human rights practices. In return for the shielding of Myanmar, Beijing deepened its economic ties with the country and gained access to valuable commodities, including energy, timber, and minerals. Chinese companies have established a powerful footing in the country and Chinese

investment and development aid have ensured it a critical role (Chow and Easley, 2015, p. 6). Beijing also started to engage in dam building to gain access to hydroelectric power and help resolve its fears about the safe transport of energy supplies from the unstable Middle East and via the Malacca Straits (Yeophantong, 2016).

However, although Myanmar is a valuable source of energy and minerals for China, it is also a troubling and disruptive neighbour. There has been much illegal trade across the borders of the two states – drugs, jade, endangered species, armaments. In addition, Myanmar's ethnic conflicts have also resulted in unsettled borders with China's Yunnan province. In 2009, conflict in the Northern Shan region of Myanmar resulted in 37,000 refugees crossing the border into China (Goh and Steinberg, 2016: 59). Indeed, in many senses the borders no longer function as sites of formal delineation between two states, since the Kachin, Kokang, Shan and Wa ethnic groups reside on both sides of this geographical space. As Chow and Easley put it: "Geography, transportation infrastructure, and cross-border kinship ties are such that ethnic communities in northern Myanmar may be culturally and economically closer to Yunnan than to the rest of Myanmar" (2015, p. 5). Moreover, the Chinese currency and Chinese language are the dominant forms of economic and cultural exchange.

Some of these ethnic ties cast back to China's Maoist era when the Chinese Communist Party supported the Burmese Communist Party thus providing the current-day relationships with some political and historical depth. The transnationalism of that Maoist era was based on ideological as well as ethnic links and affected relations not only between China and Burma but also with many of its other Southeast Asian neighbours during this revolutionary era.

The current fighting between the central government in Myanmar and the rebellious ethnic groups has spilled over the Chinese border and Beijing has sought points of leverage over these conflicts. There is a perception that Beijing exercises influence over the signing and implementation of a critical National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) as well as over the terms of that agreement. For example, China has made it plain it does not want to see a Western or Japanese role in negotiating the central government's ceasefire terms and thus pressured the United Wa State Army and the Kachin Independence Organization not to sign the NCA in October 2015. On the other hand, on the eve of Aung San Suu Kyi's first official trip to China in June 2015 (where she met President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang), a ceasefire took hold, leading some of Chow and Easley's interviewees in Myanmar to suggest that "Beijing can turn violence in the border regions on and off like a switch." (2015, p. 8).

However, Myanmar has chafed at this overdependence in its relations with China and has moved to diversify its economic and political partnerships. In 2011 the Burmese military handed over some powers to a civilian government and began a long process of political and economic reform. In November 2015, elections in Myanmar brought the National League for Democracy (NLD) to power with majorities in both houses of parliament. The NLD has put in place a new President, with Aung San Suu Kyi effectively holding the reins of power, precluded through constitutional impediments from assuming the formal head of state role. These developments, in many senses unexpected, indicate the limits of China's influence despite its overwhelming material power and its overwhelming political influence in the borderlands themselves (Goh, ed. 2016). It is much the same with North Korea where China is North Korea's dominant political and economic partner, powerfully present on the DPRK's border, not least in the provision of energy, food, and infrastructure and especially road and rail links (Reilly, 2016, p. 204). That border with North Korea is also relatively porous with respect to human traffic. And yet China cannot make Pyongyang behave in the way that it wants it to behave, especially with respect to its nuclear weapons programme. One response to this has been that President Xi Jinping has never met the North Korean Leader, Kim Jong-un, preferring to maintain regular contact with South Korea's President Park. Overwhelming power in favour of one side in borderland relationships does not necessarily lead to the expected outcomes and resistance at the local level can be effective even in the face of asymmetric material power.

Taiwan and Hong Kong – incomplete sovereignty over borderlands

Taiwan, taken over by the Japanese in 1895 and not relinquished until Tokyo's defeat in 1945, remains outside the PRC's grip. That degree of independence from the Chinese mainland has varied over time with the Guomindang-led government of President Ma Ying-jeou (in power from 2008 to 2016) willing to contemplate far closer economic, political and cultural ties than its predecessors. By the end of 2014, this had resulted in the signature of 23 Republic of China-People's Republic of China agreements or memoranda of understandings predominantly in the economic and social areas. These included an important Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement in June 2010 as well as accords on tourist visits, direct air and sea travel, postal and telecommunications, and product standards (Heilmann and Schmidt, 2014, pp.133-37; Goldstein, 2015, p.157). Some 40 percent of Taiwan's exports go to the mainland and Hong Kong and the PRC have received about 75 percent of all Taiwanese outbound foreign direct investment between 1979 and 2011. Thus, economic integration has been proceeding apace, underpinned by the so-called '1992 consensus', an agreement between the two sides signed in Singapore that there is but 'one-China' but with a meaning that differs between the two sides.

For the Democratic People's Party, the emphatic successor to the Guomindang government in the 2016 Taiwanese Presidential election, it is more circumspect with respect to that so-called consensus agreement, preferring to bundle it inside other developments. As the new Taiwanese President, Tsai Ing-wen, has put it: cross-Straits relations must rest on the "historical fact" of the 1992 discussions, together with the island's "current constitutional order...the accumulated results of the more than 20 years of cross-strait negotiations, exchanges and interactions" as well as "Taiwan's democratic principles and the will of the Taiwanese people" (Tzou, 2016).

Despite these nuanced differences between Taiwan's two main political parties, what is clear is that both are seeking to find a way to respond to the Taiwanese people's recorded preference for maintaining the status quo in relations with Beijing, where status quo means neither unification nor an outright call for independence. As polls show, "70 to 80 percent of Taiwan's populace regularly rejects the Chinese principle of one country, two systems...[and] over 60 percent...approves of adhering to the status quo" of de facto independence. And while over 20 percent favour de jure independence, the "number of advocates of unification with the PRC has continued to decline over the last decade" and this despite the increased contact and more-developed economic and political ties (Heilmann and Schmidt, 2014, p. 132). There have also been significant identity shifts with some 60.6 percent of islanders self-identifying as Taiwanese in 2014, up from 48.4 percent in 2008 (Goldstein, 2016, p. 126). This further complicates the perception of Taiwan and mainland China as borderlands.

What is nevertheless still the case, however, is that closer economic, cultural and political ties and the constant threat of a Chinese use of force to regain control of Taiwan if it claims de jure independence constrains Taiwan in many dimensions of policy. China exercises influence even if it cannot impose control. Few states (about 20) recognize the island diplomatically, and it is not represented in the United Nations or in many other international organizations. Its status is incomplete and its future uncertain.

Hong Kong, a British colony since the mid 19th century until the handover in 1997, is in a rather different position as a borderland. After the formal establishment of handover arrangements, it was agreed between London and Beijing that Hong Kong was to enjoy a high degree of autonomy for 50 years after 1997. But Chinese influence in this post-1997 period has been felt and has grown stronger in most respects since then. The PRC's extra-judicial activity, influence in elections for the Chief Executive, the considerable migration from the mainland to Hong Kong, huge tourist numbers, extensive use of the Chinese currency, greater emphasis on learning Mandarin than English, and self-censorship on the part of individuals and the hitherto free press are often said to be turning Hong Kong into 'just another Chinese city'. However, identity questions are important here too with many of the locals regarding themselves as Hong Kongers first and not Chinese mainlanders, and there is growing

unrest among a younger generation disillusioned with a governing arrangement perceived as unresponsive to their desires.

Conclusion: emulation, settlement, leverage and coercion

China historically has had a powerful influence on its near neighbours, mostly in the cultural realm, but in the northern reaches was not loath to use force and settlement to incorporate these territories. However, at times of imperial weakness the rituals associated with tributary relationships could be ignored or challenged. China's borderland experience in this sense flows along a continuum of powerful emulation at one end, to resistance to or avoidance of the Sino-centric order at the other.

In more contemporary times, questions are being raised as to whether China is attempting to reconstitute those earlier civilizational relationships with neighbours, now in modern guise but similarly involving China at the hub of a ring of network relationships that pass through neighbouring countries on to the wider world. Economics rather than culture is seen to underpin that route to Chinese influence in the 21st Century, although the Chinese leadership has also put considerable effort into ways of increasing China's 'soft power'. The preferred methods have been either to leverage its Confucian historical past or through touting the successes of its economic development model which has brought over 650 million Chinese out of absolute poverty.

In the contemporary era, where consent to its hegemony or dominance fails or is challenged, the Beijing government has shown a willingness to use the tools of statecraft in order to try to impose its preferred outcomes – in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang, and the South and East China seas, as well as with states with land borders that are porous and unstable, such as Myanmar and the DPRK. However, it has not been entirely successful in this quest for imposition despite its economic power and growing military prowess.

In addition, the idea of reconstituting borderland relationships based on a Beijing-defined Confucian past and Confucian values in which hierarchy replaces coexistence is going to be difficult for China. States like Japan and India stand strongly opposed and in its way, and the American presence as the main provider of security goods provides most regional states with alternatives. Undoubtedly, China's attractions as an economic trading and investment partner are great and where states have little choice in terms of diversifying economic relationships or are not strategically located, then Chinese influence will be very apparent (Cambodia, Laos). Elsewhere its looming presence will be more contested and its ability to reconstitute the neighbouring lands constrained .

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