

## INTRODUCTION

### **Crossing the Chinese Frontier, Interpreting the Chinese Nation: The Shifting Nexus of Community, Identity and Population Mobility**

The present volume, *Crossing the Chinese frontier: Nation, community, identity and mobility*, represents a special issue of *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations: An International Journal (CCPS)* that focuses on the interconnecting issues of population mobility, community formation and shifting ethnic identity as related to the transmuting notion of the Chinese nation amidst the context of increasingly intricate cross-border business and economic nexus and growing transnationalism. As Professor Samuel C.Y. Ku, director of the Institute of China and Asia-Pacific Studies (ICAPS) at Taiwan's National Sun Yat-sen University (NSYSU) and convener of the 2014 International Conference on Asia-Pacific Studies, "Migration and transformation in the Asia-Pacific"<sup>1</sup>, remarks in the preamble to the conference, given "the fact of increasing migration and the transformation it brings in countries across the Asia-Pacific, a number of issues and problems have emerged [which] span several different arenas, from domestic policies and regional relations, to political identities and economic interactions, to

social adaptation and cultural shifts, and more.” The ten articles featured in this special issue of *CCPS* which represent new versions of selected papers among the many that were originally presented at the said conference, duly revised by incorporating critical peer feedback received at the conference and from other reviewers, are categorized under three sections. The first section *Migration and national identity transformation* consists of four papers, beginning with Olga Yurievna Adams’s article, “Migration patterns between the Russian Far East and China’s Northeast: Lessons from experience and plans for the future”, that examines the changes in migration patterns between the Russian Far East and China’s Northeast over the two decades since the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991, analysing the trends and factors that have shaped and continued to influence these patterns, and followed by two papers focussing on the ethnic mosaic in a region of proximity – the post-Soviet Central Asia – and another one on a case of Southeast Asian Chinese diaspora.

While also looking at the *xinyimin* (新移民, “new migrants”) from China as in Adams’s paper, the article “From Dungans to *xinyimin*: China, Chinese migration and the changing sociopolitical fabric of Central Asian republics” by Emile Kok-Kheng Yeoh has as its central theme the ethnic identity formation and transformation of today’s Dungans – descendants of early Chinese migrants, mostly political refugees escaping the Imperial Ch’ing (the Manchu dynasty) court’s near-genocidal suppression of the Northwest Muslim Uprising in the late 1800s – and its change and preservation in the context of the fragile social fabric of the Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan (as well as Tajikistan, where the Dungans are today just a small rural community) that were born from the shadow of the non-defunct Soviet Union, and the arduous processes of nation-building plagued by often violent, competing emergent nationalisms as well as

political and economic turbulence. The emergence of the *xinyimin* from China flowing en masse into these countries since the early 1990s that has triggered xenophobic response in many of these Central Asian societies (linked to a growing domestic politically charged perception of “China threat” to their nation’s sovereignty which has potentially explosive implications for their bilateral relations with their powerful East Asian neighbour) is adding a new dimension to the existing set of new challenges faced by the Dungans today brought about both by the onslaught of nationalisms of the newly politically dominant ethnic groups especially in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan and the economic turmoil faced by these new republics following the collapse of the Soviet command economy, which in a violent form, resulted in the severe interethnic clashes between the Chinese-speaking and Turkic-speaking youths in Iskra, near the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek, in February 2006 which sent a tremor through Kyrgyzstan’s delicate ethnic social fabric that was still licking its wounds after the Kyrgyz-Uzbek clash in 1991 that claimed more than 300 lives.

Also focusing on the same region is the third paper under this section, “‘Kazakhstani’ identity, Eurasian regionalism and Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Biopolitics of forced migration, modernity and multilateralism” by Aliya Sartbayeva Peleo. Beginning with the traumatic history of biopolitical “forced migration” of different ethnic groups to Kazakhstan (then Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic) during the totalitarian Stalinist era that drastically altered the original “Kazakh” ethnic identity of the area into today’s ethnic mosaic that makes up the “Kazakhstani” national identity, the author proceeds to explore the present impact and future potential of the unique multilateralism of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (上海合作組織 / Шанхайская организация сотрудничества) which places its emphasis squarely on “non-traditional security, infrastructure, energy and economic

development rather than on the democratization and improvement of human rights records” (vis-à-vis the European Union model, for instance) on the forging of identity among the diverse ethnic population of the Eurasian land mass, including the Uighur and Dungan diaspora originated from western China which both in the main represented traumatic cases of biopolitical “forced migration”, though in the case of the Dungans the exodus of their forefathers from China as political refugees occurred more than a century ago, as has been explored in the preceding article in this journal issue. In the 9th meeting of the secretaries of the security councils of the SCO member states held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on 17th April 2014, China called upon SCO’s member countries to strengthen control over the Internet and the management of non-governmental organizations in order to ward off “colour revolutions” (street protests that Russian military officers view as a “new US and European approach to warfare that focuses on creating destabilizing revolutions in other states as a means of serving their security interests at low cost and with minimal casualties”<sup>2</sup> which had overthrown autocratic leaders of Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan over the past decade.<sup>3</sup>). Such call has raised fear that these SCO member countries led by China are going to join hands in strengthening control over domestic dissidents and stepping up suppression of voices of dissent. Together with the disciplinary mandate of Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) which for China is targeting the Uighur diaspora’s support for anti-Beijing movement in Xinjiang, it is becoming increasingly pertinent to explore the implication of such strengthening of authoritarian rule through the SCO on the Uighur diaspora and its relations with the Han Chinese political centre in China. Also, the impact from the forging of the new “Kazakhstani” identity as discussed in Peleo’s article in turn on interpreting nation, community and identity in the context of demographic mobility as in the theme of this special issue

is apparent, by taking into consideration the transnationalism of ethnic minorities on both sides of the border – China’s Central Asians especially the Kazakhs in Xinjiang (and the “returned Kazakhs” or “Oralman” resettling in Kazakhstan under the “Oralman” repatriation programme that aims at modifying Kazakhstan’s demographic equilibrium to the disadvantage of the Slavic populations<sup>4</sup>) and the Uighur diaspora in Kazakhstan and other Central Asian republics whose identity and well-being are deeply affected by the volatile political situation across the border in Xinjiang and their host countries’ relations with China.

The fourth article under this first section, “Ethnic Chinese remigration from Southeast Asian countries since 1960s: A case study of Malaysian Chinese outflows” by Kang Xiaoli, shifts our focus to Southeast Asia to examine the phenomenon of ethnic Chinese remigration from Malaysia to other countries – mostly advanced developed countries. There is also inflow of ethnic Chinese from Malaysia to Taiwan, Hong Kong and Mainland China but they are mostly short-term entrants, distinct from the “Return Ethnic Chinese” from other Southeast Asian countries – mainly from the Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia who fled to Mainland China as refugees in the early years after the Communist conquest of Indochina that led to political persecution, economic hardship and genocide in the region when the new Communist rulers imposed radical, brutal collectivisation and elimination of the “bourgeois” class.

Thus, traversing regions from Central Asia to the Russian Far East, China’s Northeast to Southeast Asia, the four papers under the section *Migration and national identity transformation* scrutinise the intricate nexus involving cross-border population movement, national identity formation and ethnic identity preservation, as well as ethnogenesis and reethnicisation amidst the complex and often volatile milieu of political

change, economic transition, resurrection of quiescent central ethnonationalism and resurgence of latent or suppressed peripheral nationalism that often lead to violence against minorities or rising discriminatory ethnic preferential policies. From biopolitics of ethnic accommodation for survival and to avoid a dreadful state of *bellum omnium contra omnes* – Thomas Hobbes’s portentous “state of nature” as told in his 1651 treatise *Leviathan*: “a condition of war of everyone against everyone”<sup>5</sup> – to geopolitics of tactical actions and responses, population mobility voluntary or forced is bringing tremendous transformation to polities, societies and economies through evolving transnationalism, transcending borders, and reinterpreting the notion of the Chinese nation and its counterparts in the regions concerned.

The next two sections in this special issue continue with this focus on population movement and its impact on the biopolitics of identity formation and maintenance and geopolitics of strategic relations, but with further extension into the related issues of local community development and empowerment, and the evolvement and advancement of the international status of the Chinese nation.

Setting the context of the section *Public policy, societal outlook and community development* is Tzu-Ting Huang’s article “Media representation of Taiwan’s new female immigrants in documentaries” that looks at Taiwan’s “fifth ethnic group”<sup>6</sup>, the new female immigrants, which she describes as an underprivileged “Others” having difficulties to integrate into the Taiwanese society – being fully accompanied by all the negative labels and stereotyping like “foreign bride”, “commoditized female” and “mercenary marriage”. Huang takes the approach of accessing the meaning of media representation in the form of documentaries and in the process she analyses how these documentaries reflect by means of shots and language the important aspects in the lives of these new female immigrants including their multiple roles such as

daughters-in-law and wives, their civil rights, and empowerment within the current sociopolitical praxis.

Continuing with the focus on State policy and community development in this section, next we have Chunlei Huang's in-depth analysis of the problems and contradictions of an important mode of urbanization in Mainland China in her article "Mixed supply model of public service provision in 'village to residence' community: An empirical case study in Jinan" and Andi Kao's investigation of the impact of Taiwan-Mainland China rapprochement resulting in growing trade and investment, as well as increasing long- and short-term migrant labour and visitors, on the indigenous Paiwan ethnic group, typically among Taiwan's most vulnerable citizens. While Huang examines at once community restructuring at the micro level and rapid national process of urbanization in microcosm, Kao on the other hand in his paper "Indigenous communities and cross-Strait rapprochement: A case study of Chun-ri and Shih-wen" focuses upon the plight and vulnerability of the minority Paiwan nation amidst the complex web of biopolitical interdependence and geopolitical interplay of the dominant split Chinese nation across the waters of the Taiwan Strait.

Picking up on this background milieu of at once intra- and international relations, the last section of this special issue, *National identity and evolvement of strategic relations*, opens with Ching Chang's article "Taiwan's security calculus of cross-Strait migration" that focuses on the rather unique issue of migration across the Taiwan Strait, i.e. between Taiwan and Mainland China, which is as the author points out, while relatively insignificant in scale yet indisputably politically sensitive and a cause for security concern, possible political myths and unequal treatment of cross-Strait migrants, and then moves back into history with Xiaohua Ma's paper "China, Japan, and the United States in World War II: The relinquishment of unequal treaties in 1943" to see

how the entwining of national identity and strategic relations began to manifest itself in the global arena in a strategic action which not only marked a historical turning point in America's China policy but also led to the transformation of East Asian geopolitics and international strategic relations during World War II and henceforth charted China's road of strategic positioning among the world's powers. Moving forward from this fascinating historical prelude, this section closes with an interesting exploration of what to many has come controversially to define the extent of China's current composite power outreach by Hai-Tao Tsao, Cheng-Chang Lu and Ryh-Song Yeh in their article "China's outward FDI in Africa: Enterprises with different ownership types".

This volume ends with two book reviews by Ng Sor Tho and Zhang Yemo respectively on Li Peilin and Laurence Rouklleau-Berger's *China's internal and international migration* (2013) and Tom Miller's *China's urban billion: The story behind the biggest migration in human history* (2012).

Whereas in 1965, about 75 million people (2.5 per cent of the world population) migrated across country borders, in 2010 the number had already risen to around 214 million (3 per cent of the world population)<sup>7</sup> and almost four times of this international migration figure are the more than 740 million people who migrated within their own countries from rural to urban areas and from city to city<sup>8</sup>. As Professor Samuel Ku notes in the convening preamble to the 2014 International Conference on Asia-Pacific Studies, "Migration and transformation in the Asia-Pacific", in which earlier versions of these ten selected papers were presented: "As short-term migration continues to take place, the long-term impact of these various groups as a transformative force is beginning to emerge in many countries." Such transformative force is strikingly evident as, through the three distinctive sections in this special issue, the authors of these ten selected papers bring us on a journey cruising, as the title of



this volume says, across the Chinese frontier, whether geographically or metaphorically, whether in terms of demographic mobility, ethnographic transition or global “Going Out” (*zouchuqu*, 走出去) cross-border expansion of political and economic clout, along which the very notion of the Chinese nation is being interpreted and reinterpreted against the backdrop of the shifting nexus of community, identity and that real winner among ideologies, nationalism. All these ten articles represent new versions of the earlier papers presented at the said conference, duly revised by incorporating critical peer feedback received at the conference and from other reviewers. We would like to thank these conference presenters who have taken great effort to revise their papers for inclusion in this special issue as well as the anonymous reviewers who have given invaluable assistance in providing critical comments on the earlier versions of these papers. We are also grateful to Mr Chang Le and Mr Zhang Yemo for their crucial assistance in proof-reading. The responsibility for any errors and inadequacies that remain is of course fully mine.

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*Chief Editor*

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## Notes

1. The 2014 International Conference on Asia-Pacific Studies: “Migration and Transformation in the Asia-Pacific” held at the National Sun Yat-sen University, Taiwan, on 13-15 November 2014, jointly organized by the Institute of China and Asia-Pacific Studies of the National Sun Yat-sen University and the Department of Political Science of the University of the

Philippines Diliman.

2. Cordesman, Anthony H. (2014). Russia and the “Color Revolution”: A Russian military view of a world destabilized by the US and the West. Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Washington, DC, 28th May. <<http://csis.org/publication/russiaandcolorrevolution>>
3. 東方日報 /*Oriental Daily News/ODN* (Malaysian daily), 19th April 2014.
4. Laruelle, Marlène and Sébastien Peyrouse (2009). Cross-border minorities as cultural and economic mediators between China and Central Asia. *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 93-119 (see pp. 114-118 on the “Oralman”).
5. Hobbes, Thomas (1651). *LEVIATHAN, THE MATTER, FORME and POWER of A COMMONWEALTH ECCLESIASTICALL and CIVIL*, London: Andrew Crooke / *Leviathan* (Oxford World’s Classics), New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
6. The other four ethnic groups are the Malayo-Polynesian Aborigines, Hakka (客家), Mainland Chinese who came to Taiwan in 1949 and their descendants (*waishengren*, 外省人, i.e. “people from outside provinces”) and the majority “native Taiwanese”, i.e. “local” Minnan/Hokkien (閩南 / 福建)-speaking Hoklo/*Tâi-oân-lâng* (福佬 / 臺灣人) who together with the local Hakka (both being descendants of Chinese who had already moved to Taiwan before the Republic of China took over the rule of Taiwan in 1945) are also known as the *benshengren* (本省人, i.e. “people of this province”).
7. King, Russell (2010). *People on the move: An atlas of migration*. London: Myriad Editions. Cited in: Gratton, Lynda (2011). *The shift: The future of work is already here*. London: William Collins, pp. 92-93.
8. United Nations Development Program (UNDP). *Human development report, 2009*, p. 21. Cited in: Gratton, Lynda (2011). *The shift: The future of work is already here*. London: William Collins, pp. 92-93.

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# **Migration and National Identity Transformation**

