

EURASIA BORDER REVIEW

Series 2 / Volume 13 / Fall 2023

Eurasia Unit for Border Research (Japan)
Slavic-Eurasian Research Center, Hokkaido University



Eurasia Border Review Second Series

Volume 13 Fall 2023

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Printed in Japan

In Memory of Professor Ulises Granados Quiroz

The tragic news regarding the death of Ulises Granados Quiroz reached us on June 1, 2021, from one of our friends who saw it on Facebook. At first, none of us could believe it, but after a few phone calls and emails, we received confirmation that this was not a hoax. At the time, we did not know the cause of Ulises' death and thought that it may be COVID-19 related, but later we found out that he had fallen victim to assault. Ulises was one of the kindest and most caring souls we know, so it is possible that, as a good Samaritan, he was trying to help someone in trouble and became a victim himself. Until today, the exact circumstances of Ulises' passing remain unclear.

The news was shocking to all of us. Ulises, who was still in his early 50s, had so much ahead of him as an individual and as a scholar. He was one of the very few experts on China in Mexico, and numerous people, including those in the media and diplomatic circles, relied on his expertise. Ulises had come to Japan for his post-graduate studies and received a PhD from the University of Tokyo. He studied and conducted research on Sino-Japanese relations and became a bridge between Japan and Mexico. Ulises worked at the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM) in Mexico City, a distinguished private university that fosters the Mexican diplomatic elite, where he contributed to education and research on international relations in East Asia.

Alexander Bukh: I first met Ulises at a conference in Korea in 2010, at a time when both of us worked in Japan. Ulises' mentor was Professor Takeshi Hamashita, also a contributor to



Office in ITAM

this memorial issue. Ulises studied maritime issues in Asia as well as the history of China under Professor Hamashita's supervision. Ulises and I became friends immediately, as we had many things in common, with both having the experience of being an international student in Japan and foreigners working at Japanese universities. At that time, I worked at Tsukuba University before moving to my current position at Victoria University of Wellington. Ulises was working at the University of Tokyo but eventually moved back to his hometown, Mexico City. We remained good friends even though we worked in different parts of the world. We met again in 2016 during my

visit to Mexico, and Ulises was an exceptional host, driving me around and showing me various parts of Mexico City. Ulises also asked me to introduce Japanese experts and scholars on Asia to run an intensive course on Asia, supported by Japan Foundation. This is when I introduced Ulises to Akihiro Iwashita, an expert on China and Russia, who went to Mexico City later that same year.

Akihiro Iwashita: During my stay in Mexico City, I gave several lectures on border studies and territorial issues in Russia, Japan and China as well as Eurasia. The Japanese ambassador to Mexico also attended these lectures, and I induced Professor Yoshifumi Nakai (affiliated with Gakushin University at the time, also a contributor to this memorial issue), to lecture on the same intensive course. This responded to a request from Ulises to invite an expert who could speak about China's foreign policy.

In July 2017, I invited Ulises to the summer symposium at the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center. I organized a panel titled, "Very Near, Far, Wherever You Are: Views on Sino-Russian Relations," in an attempt to diversify perspectives on Sino-Russian relations with experts on Russia from India and Mongolia, and Ulises took part in this panel, sharing his views as a China expert from Mexico. This memorial issue includes the hitherto unpublished papers from that panel.

Naomi Chi: When Ulises came to Sapporo, I instantly hit it off with him and we became very good friends. At the time, I was the Representative of the Japan Chapter of the Association for Borderland Studies (ABS), and when I asked for his cooperation, he gladly promised to support our project. When the annual ABS conference was held in San Antonio in April 2018, Ulises took part and presented on the various challenges existing at the border region between Mexico and Guatemala. His presentation covered the situation concerning undocumented migrants and the smuggling of goods across the Mexico-Guatemala border, and was based on field work conducted in Chiapas, at the southern border of Mexico, with Akihiro Iwashita in 2017. There were numerous presentations concerning border regions between the U.S. and Mexico at that conference, but very few on border issues to the south of Mexico. Therefore, Ulises' presentation was not only well received but all of us had high expectations and were looking forward to hearing more about this border region from him. Even after the San Antonio conference, we continued our research collaboration and organized a panel at the 2018 IPSA (International Political Science Association) in Brisbane, Australia. I also met Ulises at the ISA (International Studies Association) in Asia which took place in Singapore in July 2019, where he brought his son and we all had lunch together at a hawker center near the conference venue. Sadly, this was the last time I saw Ulises.

We, Bukh and Iwashita, also met Ulises on July 21, 2018, during the IPSA conference. By chance, Bukh contacted Iwashita after he found his name in the program, and all three of us went out for a dinner together. Surprised by the unreasonable prices, we left early and continued to drink at a slightly cheaper beer hall. We celebrated to our future research cooperation and friendship. After the IPSA conference, Ulises visited Wellington and spent few days at Bukh's home. Sadly, July 2018 was the last time we saw Ulises.

Iwashita: The last email I exchanged with Ulises was dated November 12, 2020. After talking about the difficulties of teaching during COVID-19, we made a promise to go to Belize, Mexico's neighbor to the south, together when this pandemic is over.

Bukh: The last time I exchanged words with Ulises was on October 28, 2020, just after a Zoom presentation I did on territorial disputes in Asia for his ITAM class. As always, we promised to see each other soon, online or in person, but unfortunately this was not to happen.

The three of us write this preface in memory of our dear friend, Ulises Granados, and wish

to send our deepest condolences to his family and friends. We sincerely hope that his work and aspirations will be recorded and passed on to future generations. We would like to thank everyone who contributed to this memorial issue and everyone who assisted in the editorial process.

Ulises will live in our hearts forever.

July 30, 2023

On behalf of his friends

Akihiro Iwashita, Alexander Bukh and Hyunjoo Naomi Chi

Memories of Ulises Granados as an Advisor in Japan

Takeshi Hamashita

I remember that it was the winter of 1996 or 1997 when I first met with Ulises Granados at the University of Tokyo, when he stopped by the director's office at the Institute of Advanced Studies on Asia. I recollect that he told me he was working on Mexico's diplomatic relations at the time, and I asked him about his plans to continue his research in the doctoral program. This was the first time we met, and I was interested in how his future research would develop in Japan.

During his doctoral course, Ulises actively pursued his research and presented his papers at international conferences, generally focusing on international relations surrounding Asia's maritime seas in the 1920s and 1930s. We would sometimes meet at international conferences in Singapore and other places.

The general state of research at the time viewed maritime issues of Asia as an extension of Western colonialism. The analysis of international relations in the South China Sea in the 1920s and 1930s was based on the fact that the Western powers had colonized Southeast Asia, and therefore that the region's maritime international relations were constituted through relations between the Western powers, including Japan. For Asian states, questions of maritime governance in the period were an outgrowth of Western colonialism, rather than a product of the region.

In contrast to this tendency, however, Ulises Granados' doctoral thesis offered exciting new research into the regional history of international maritime relations. By examining Asian maritime issues from a more historical standpoint, the thesis offered a new perspective on the nature of maritime policy in Asia and for its states. In other words, the thesis offered a series of exceptional insights for the study of international relations based on the author's historical research on Asian maritime issues. Ulises Granados would complete his doctoral studies at the University of Tokyo's Graduate School of Humanities in March 2004.

Our subsequent interactions were largely Christmas cards and irregular email correspondences, but in retrospect a major turning point was in 2010 when Ulises informed me that his job at Komaba (Associate Professor, Institute for the Advancement of Liberal Education, Faculty of Liberal Arts, University of Tokyo), would expire in 2010, and that he was on the lookout for new employment. In that email, he expressed a strong desire to work in Japan, and especially to remain in Tokyo. It was around this time that I also met his entire family. Some of the information is quoted below:

Greetings from Granados (Hamashita Sensei 20100512)

Ulises Granados <ugqxiaohu@yahoo.com>

2010年5月12日 下午3:21

Dear Prof. Hamashita,

I hope health is going well for you this year! I am still working at Komaba Campus, this is my 5th year, but unfortunately I cannot continue beyond the 6th year. Therefore I am starting my job hunting. I prefer to apply for an Asian related job (teaching and research) instead of Spanish (now I feel already the urgency not to spend more years teaching language....) I wonder whether it is possible to ask you for a recommendation/ recommendation letter for a future employer. I would like very much to work in Tokyo, but if this year I cannot find a job, I will need to look overseas. I just love Japan, especially Tokyo, so to go to another country is my last option. Mexico is the last resort, its security and economic conditions are worsening, therefore it is not an option for me. Thank you so much!

Regarding my own research, I would also like to ask you for advice (please forgive me for the long message). I am preparing research on navigation in Guangdong during the period 1870-1900. I am struggling with sources (primary and secondary) and I wonder whether you might lead me to some (Japanese and Chinese) research on this topic...I have some sources on the CMSC navigation company (Li Hongzhang`s one) but particularly with Guangdong I need more. Please give me advise. Thank you!!

This month I am going to ICES conference, I hope we can meet there!!!

*Sincerely,
Ulises Granados
Ulises Granados, Ph.D.
Faculty of Arts and Sciences
The University of Tokyo, Japan
ugqxiaohu@yahoo.com
granados@ask.c.u-tokyo.ac.jp (office)*

Subsequently I heard in 2012 that he had taken a job in Mexico.

New job appointment

Ulises Granados <ugqxiaohu@yahoo.com>

2012年4月28日 週六 下午11:14

Dear friends and colleagues,

I'd like to share with you I have been appointed Associate Professor in the Academic Department of International Studies at Mexico Autonomous Institute of Technology –ITAM– in Mexico City. I am happy to share this moment with you, and hope to continue to receive your support in such a challenging and exciting job both in Asia and Mexico. Cheers!

Ulises

The email also included the photo of the school gate, and I remember feeling reassured by the willingness of Ulises to engage in both teaching and research in his home country. Almost immediately, a follow-up email gave me more details about the new job and research plans that Ulises was developing for his return home.

I got a job in Mexico

Ulises Granados <ugqxiaohu@yahoo.com>

2012年5月11日 下午7:27

Dear Hamashita Sensei,

I would like to share with you I was appointed Associate Professor at the Academic Department of International Studies, Mexico Autonomous Institute of Technology (ITAM), a private think tank nurturing the current economic and political elite in Mexico. It is an excellent job that demands me to regularly publish in international journals, teaching and traveling to Asia for academic exchanges. Therefore I have to focus my current research on international relations of Asia, where I would like to do parallel research on maritime Asia, like the South China Sea. One of the tasks for my job is coming to China, Japan, India and SE Asia to try to make academic exchanges, so I hope to have more chances to see you besides academic conferences.

I am traveling to Mexico in July, so I have time and you are in Tokyo we could meet before having my new post.

Sincerely,

Ulises

Ulises Granados, Ph.D.

ugqxiaohu@yahoo.com

The direction of Ulises's research was clearly evolving, retaining its basic focus on the international relations of maritime affairs in Asia, but coming to include several new research topics within that broad frame. Particularly, Ulises was looking to develop a focused research agenda examining navigation issues for the period running from 1870 to the 1900s, focusing on Guangdong and its relations with East Asian and South-East Asian countries. The project also enthusiastically highlighted a number of international academic exchange initiatives with East and Southeast Asian countries, and promised that Ulises would again appear in Japan for research visits in the near future.

It is a tragedy that such a promising researcher on Asian maritime issues should be taken from us, particularly given the evolving international situation which demands the active contribution of such promising scholars to questions occupying people around the world today. The bright and enthusiastic attitude which Ulises brought to such questions frequently lit up his face in a dazzling smile, one which I was fortunate enough to experience many times in the fifteen years following our first meeting, and which I am able to see as if it were only yesterday. I wish here to express my deepest condolences to his family.

At Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, China.
June 19, 2023

*This essay was translated by Edward Boyle.

A China-hand from Mexico

Yoshifumi Nakai

Dr. Granados in Hokkaido

I met Dr. Granados for the first time in Japan. He was one of the guest speakers at the international conference, *Northeast Asia's Fault-line: One Hundred Years of Sino/Russian/Soviet Competitive Cooperation*. The host and sponsor of the conference was the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center (SRC) at Hokkaido University. The timing of the conference, July 2017, was quite interesting. All the participants enjoyed a sweet summer in Hokkaido. They knew, however, that a storm was coming. Donald Trump had just begun his term in January and started withdrawing the U.S. from commitments all over the world. At the same time, the Russian and Chinese autocrats, Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping, were consolidating their power at the top.

The diversity of the conference was impressive. The conference covered wide and large disciplines: international relations, geo-politics, regional studies, border studies, and international economic/information transactions. Prominent scholars came from Russia, China, Great Britain, and Canada. In addition, the conference featured a special session, *Northeast Asia Viewed from the Outside*. For this session, the SRC invited three speakers from India, Mongolia, and Mexico. And so, Dr. Granados showed up in Sapporo city.

Did Dr. Granados convince all those inquisitive attendants? Yes, he did. In fact, he did more than that. I was lucky because I had not known him as a researcher beforehand. I had just read his brief academic self-introduction. My expectation at that time was, frankly speaking, not too high. Here came another proponent of the “China threat” argument and a hardline realist, that was what I thought. When I listened to his presentation, however, I changed my mind. Here was a real researcher I could talk to. He knew the subject and was willing to share his view. It was gratifying to meet someone you could talk to without any inhibitions, either ideological or organizational. It was such a sweet surprise that such a colleague, an independent thinker and researcher, lived and worked in Mexico, a country far away from China across the Pacific.

After reading some of his academic works and his full resume, my first impression at the SRC conference turned into a conviction. Here was a man who could see things critically and, at the same time, objectively. He kept his initial interest and built up his academic career in pursuit of that interest. In Mexico, he studied “China’s Hong Kong Recovery” and wrote an MA thesis on the “Spratly Islands.” In Tokyo, he completed his dissertation on the “South China Sea Territorial Conflict.” These were important subjects worth studying. His more recent publications indicate that he kept on studying territorial disputes and international relations in Asia and the Pacific Rim.

His approach to his research subject was comprehensive and well-balanced. He did not seek a simple solution or a simplified explanation. Rather, he dug deep down into the ground until he found the roots of the conflict. Well-known publications often show us a simplified picture[1]. The territorial conflicts in the South China Sea were, they would say, zero-sum games played by a big bad China and a group of good but small players, such as, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei. Dr. Granados argued that the matter was not that simple. To Dr. Granados, the history of colonization by past empires, Ming, Qing, and Japanese Empire, did matter. The modernization process which happened in South East Asia in the first half of the

twentieth century also mattered. Cooperative relations could develop and so could competitions and conflicts[2].

His tenacity was admirable. I knew from my own experience that he must have encountered serious obstacles on the way to become a China-hand. There were several ready-made questions: “Forget China. Study more friendly and important countries, like the United States and/or Japan.” “China study market is already very crowded. There are thousands of Chinese, Japanese, and western scholars studying China. What can you, a Mexican, add?” I do not know how Dr. Granados responded to these questions. However, although he knew that there were many landmines and pitfalls in the field of China studies, he was not intimidated. He kept on fighting. He brushed off those not-too-friendly questions. His academic works are proof of his perseverance.

If he were alive, we could have exchanged our research notes. We could have organized a joint research project, like Professor Iwashita of the SRC did a few years ago. We could meet somewhere like, Singapore, Manila, Shanghai, and Hong Kong. He could show up again in Hokkaido, Tokyo, or anywhere else. We could have met again in Mexico City. His sudden loss really hurts.

Professor Granados in Mexico City

One month after our initial meeting, I was in Mexico City. From mid-August 2017, I delivered seven three-hour lectures in two weeks. My lectures were part of the summer course Professor Granados taught at his home institute, Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM). To most China scholars in Japan, Mexico is perhaps one of the most remote nations. I was not an exception. I had little knowledge about Mexico and ITAM. What should I teach there? Did it make any sense that a Japanese researcher would talk about China?

At first, I considered to take a tried-and-true route. It was also the easiest option. I was to deliver the same lecture I was doing at my home institute, Gakushuin University. In Tokyo, I divided my lecture in two parts. In the first semester, I focused on Mao’s China and covered the first 30-odd years of the People’s Republic. In the second semester, I took up the reformist China that began with the death of the Great Leader, Chairman Mao, in 1976. I gave up this option, however. Teaching in a different country and facing different students was a new challenge, and I wanted to learn from this experience. I did not want to play it safe.

The previous year, 2016, China began a grand project, the so-called Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China’s global reach and presence had become a real time issue[3]. In Tokyo, I had a chance to talk about the “Rise of China” in front of non-Japanese audiences, first at the Norwegian Embassy and then at the Culture Center of the French Embassy. On these occasions, I talked about “How China Became Rich.” The talk was based on my research and experience in Guangdong province and Hong Kong. From the summer of 1991 to April 1994, I worked at the Japanese Consulate General in Hong Kong as a cultural attaché. There, I witnessed Deng Xiaoping’s so-called Southern Trip and succeeding “Economic Boom” in Southern China and Southeast Asia[4].

The question was if this theme was suitable for the lecture at ITAM. What would Professor Granados say? His reply was a non-conditional “yes.” Later, I found out why he said yes to my not-so-orthodox theme. First, Professor Granados’s lecture covered so many important areas and disciplines that I could concentrate on my rather narrow field. I have

lost his course outline for that year. But I remember that his course on Asia and China was quite comprehensive. He began his lecture with the history of China and its interactions with neighboring nations, including Russia, Korea, and Japan. China's drive to become a great socialist state was a constant theme of his lecture. His lecture was, in short, not so different from those courses on Asia and China in the major institutes of the world. No wonder my lecture easily fit in.

The other reason why my lecture was welcome was the special nature of ITAM. Its universalistic and elitist character stood out. According to Wikipedia, it is one of Mexico's most important institutions of higher learning; highly prestigious in the social sciences. It is also considered one of Mexico's think tanks and has the highest rank of admission to the Mexican Foreign Service. In the first session of my lecture, I conducted a small survey: "How many of you have been to the United States? How many of you have been to Asia, including China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, two Koreas, and Japan?"

To the first question, about eighty percent of the 70 students answered yes. About twenty percent of students answered yes to the second question. I thought twenty percent was very high. If I had conducted the same survey in my home institute in Tokyo, the percentages would have been much lower. Besides, all the students chose to take this course during the summer vacation. They were eager to learn about East Asia. There were quite a few students from Asia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, China, and Japan. They might be a bit curious about me, an unknown professor from Japan. What was he going to say about China and Japan? Could he speak English or Spanish?

It turned out that ITAM students were genuinely interested in Asia. The political-economic developments in China and Japan, in particular, were the main foci of their attention. Most of the students were interested in three major areas: economics, international relations, and international business. It also turned out that Professor Granados was an ideal instructor for them in all these three academic disciplines. He knew both China and Japan. He had worked in the higher education industry in Japan for a long time, more than thirteen years. He had accumulated professional skills in Intercultural Communication, Political Science, Translation, Lecturing, and International Relations.

At ITAM and in Mexico, Professor Granados proved that studying in Japan made a lot of sense. You did not have to major in Japan-specific disciplines, such as literature and history. You could study China, Russia, the United States, or any field of study you chose. He was a model of a hard-working researcher. He was also a good teacher. He taught at the ITAM since 2012 and built a large body of students who had professional skills and knowledge. He was a big bridge between East Asia and Mexico, and its two main corridors led to China and Japan.

Ulises-san in Japan

Ulises-san and I had a lot in common. Both of us spent a considerable time, about 13 years or so, in foreign countries. In the case of Ulises-san, it was Japan, and for me, the United States. Both of us received a degree from foreign institutes, in the case of Ulises-san, the University of Tokyo, and for me, the University of Michigan. Both of us returned to our home countries, eventually. He settled down in Mexico City at the ITAM, and for me, in Tokyo at Gakushuin University.

Besides these similarities in our academic career, we shared a common experience. We worked. If you stayed in a foreign country as a graduate student for a few years, you might be

able to support yourself with grants or scholarships. After that, living was not easy if you had a family to support. After I finished all my coursework, I started working in Detroit as a technical interpreter. There were strong demands for that kind of job at that time.

It was the early 1980s, the so-called Reagan Years. Japan, not China, was emerging as an economic giant. Japanese auto manufacturers started investing heavily in the United States. The U.S. dollar got so cheap. As a result, U.S. policy makers in Washington D.C. started talking about a “Japan Threat.” The U.S. Congress passed laws for unilateral economic sanctions. These laws targeted the Soviet Union in the 1970s. In the 1980s, the target was Japan. China became a new target in the 1990s. There was a rumor in Detroit that Mazda was going to buy out Ford, which was in serious financial troubles.

I learned a lot about the United States, Japan and their relationship through that job. These lessons would not have been learned if I had stayed in Ann Arbor, where the University of Michigan was located. These lessons became an integral part of my research on China. I learned, for example, that not all the American executives were a bunch of fools. American engineers and Japanese counterparts could communicate without an interpreter. When I stumbled on some technical details, they just drew a diagram or numbers on the white board. Then, the problem was settled. My job became easy after that.

On the streets in Detroit, some of the union leaders and local politicians were smashing Japanese cars. To those workers who were about to lose their jobs, Japan was a real threat. Detroit looked like a very dangerous place for the Japanese. The workers I met on the factory floor were not dangerous but very friendly. Some of them spent a few years in Japan as members of the U.S. armed forces. Most of them had fond memories of Japan. I did not encounter any racial discrimination or harassment at work. Perhaps, I was lucky. After I worked in Detroit, I became more cautious about accepting somebody else’s judgment and analysis about the United States and its relations with Japan.

I believe Ulises-san had a similar experience in Japan. In Mexico, I heard from Ulises-san that he had worked in Tokyo, first, as a teaching assistant and a part-time instructor. Later, after he completed his doctor’s degree, he became a full time Associate Professor at the University of Tokyo. He also worked with NHK, the Japanese Broadcasting Station, as a news anchor at the International news service, NHK World. He must have met various kind of people on the job, just like I had in Detroit.

His work experience in Tokyo seemed to have enriched his academic resources. After he returned to Mexico, he became a regular news analyst on Asian events for major international news service, such as, AFP, CNN and BBC. Quite a few Chinese must have known his name. Besides the English and Spanish media, Dr. Granados showed up in the Chinese official media, Xinhua news agency, People’s Daily and China Daily.

If we learn something through written media, like a book, our learning remains two-dimensional. The same is true with the internet. Books and the internet are effective and powerful tools for learning. The learning of this sort lacks, however, the important third dimension, that is, historical and social context of the time. Living and working in a foreign country will help you understand that. The time, place, your social status, your personal characters all matter in that dimension.

Ulises-san’s three-dimensional understanding of Japan really mattered. I did not have to explain to him how the Japanese politics and the bureaucracy worked. Often, he knew better. His understanding of Mexico was, evidently, much deeper than my two-dimensional

understanding. That made him an excellent coordinator of the Asia Pacific Studies Program and other Pan-Pacific projects. During my stay in Mexico, I had a chance to deliver my lecture on the rise of China at the University of Colima, a historical port city along the Pacific Coast. The lecture was funded by the Japan Foundation and Ulises-san was a coordinator. The lecture went very well and the operation and the logistical support were impeccable.

Ulises-san a Sure China-hand

Let me touch on our differences. Although both of us belonged to the so-called China School, our approaches to China differed. First was the time frame. To me, the starting point of my China study was 1981. I stayed in Beijing, at Peking University, for seven months. The United States and China normalized their relations in 1979, and Peking University started accepting students from the United States. I was doing my masters at Indiana University and joined a group of forty students. There was no direct flight to Beijing at that time. We flew to Hong Kong and took an intensive course on simplified characters. Almost all the universities in the United States taught Chinese language using the Taiwan-style complicated Chinese characters. Our teachers at Peking University regretted that they did not speak English. The only foreign language they could learn in their youth was Russian. Those were the days.

When Ulises-san came to Tokyo and began his doctoral study in 1998, China was no longer a poor developing nation. China had survived two crises, the Tiananmen Incident in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Deng Xiaoping died in February 1997. The power transition to his successors happened peacefully. The return of Hong Kong in July 1997 also happened smoothly. China withstood the financial crisis in Asia in the same year. While the major Asian economies like Singapore, Hong Kong and South Korea stagnated, the Chinese economy kept on growing in double digits. In short, China had risen. And this proud and confident China was Ulises-san's starting point.

Secondly, our approaches to China differed. My academic background belonged to political science, the academic discipline which had developed mostly in the United States. Back in the 1980s, and perhaps still now, the University of Michigan was a Mecca of the quantitative approach. All the graduate students were required to take advanced courses in statistics and research methodology. There was a strong China studies faculty. But those students who majored in area-studies disciplines were in the minority. I was educated to study my subject, that was modern China, using some of the frameworks of political science[5]. For example, I tended to choose a specific event or decision that happened in a particular time. Then, I tried to assemble the objective data, mostly in numbers, and build a hypothesis. In this setting, your analysis was the testing of the hypothesis you had chosen.

Ulises-san's approach to China was quite different. The theory and hypothesis did not appear in the forefront. They came out in the end of his analysis. He looked at the matter from several different angles, historical, societal, economic, and political, for example, and tried to come up with a convincing narrative. His approach was empirical, inductive, and, in a good sense of the word, traditional. Ulises-san stood on the shoulders of the great experts of Asia and China at the University of Tokyo, such as Yuzo Mizoguchi, Takeshi Hamashita, and Akira Ishii.

Do our differences matter? Yes, in a positive way. There is an ancient saying about China. China is like a big elephant. It is so big that the whole picture is hard to get. If you are blind and rub the nose of the elephant, you may conclude that China is a rubber hose. This is a good lesson in China studies. Certainly, our knowledge of China is limited.

Are we in a better position than those ancient people now? Yes and no. Let us begin with no. Today, China has grown into a giant or a dragon. Now, China is larger and much more complicated than an elephant. Getting China right is more difficult than in ancient times. Now, let us turn to the good news. For blind people in the ancient times, rubbing was the only way to get to know China. Not anymore. Now we can rub the elephant with virtually a thousand hands. We can stretch our hands in different directions and we can rub in different ways. We can add up all those data and come up with a sharp graphic.

The point is we need a sure hand. Most of the time, a sure hand is more efficient and precise than a blind touch. Ulises-san had just such a sure hand. His hand was not only sure and experienced. It was also unique and delicate. His hand might have drawn an interesting picture of China, one no other hands could. He knew Japan and Mexico. His picture might have brought together Chinese-Japanese-Mexican characteristics. I deeply regret that I cannot see such a picture, at least for a while.

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[3] David Shambaugh, *China Goes Global: The Partial Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Hugh White, *The China Choice: Why America Should Share Power* (Collingwood: Black Inc., 2012).

[4] Yoshifumi Nakai, "How China Became Rich: Japanese Business in Guangdong in the early 1990s," French Research Institute On Japan, March 18, 2016; "The political consequences of peace: China's retreat for survival, 1988–91," in Shinichiro Tabata ed., *Eurasia's Regional Powers Compared: China, India, Russia* (London: Routledge, 2015): 120–136.

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Ulises Granados and Yoshifumi Nakai in Mexico, 2017

Making Border Studies Together: From Japan to the World

Akihiro Iwashita

Introduction

Border Studies developed in Asia after its birth in the U.S. and Europe. There are many “border” researchers working in and on Asia but they have yet to discover that Asian Border Studies has reshaped the world. Ulises Granados was undoubtedly a potential researcher to contribute to the research development of this field. Ulises studied the South China Sea border disputes in history. After earning his Ph.D. at the University of Tokyo under the tutelage of Professor Takeshi Hamashita, a famous scholar of Asian Studies and maritime networks, he moved back to his home country, Mexico[1]. There, he became one of the foremost commentators on contemporary China issues in Mexico, as well as working on the South China Sea disputes that currently feature in policy making circles and the media[2].

The Border Studies community embraced him in the context of not only Asian Studies in Latin America but also borders in the Global South. Factually, Mexico is located in a critical geo-political position between the U.S. and Guatemala, to its south. Mexico’s southern borders are a gateway for migrant-refugees from autocratic Honduras and El Salvador. However, entrance into southern Mexico is comparatively simple, while mobility within Mexico has been difficult for the migrants because of social instability and the risks of kidnapping in Mexico itself. In 2018, thousands of migrants pushed from Guatemala to the U.S. through Mexico, though President Donald Trump refused admit them onto U.S. soil and they were blocked at the border of San Diego. In December 2017, Ulises Granados and I did field research in the Mexican south, contributing to the world-wide border studies community by investigating the “notorious” borderlands in Central America[3]. We also had plans to visit the Mexican-Belize borderlands soon, but he passed away before that trip became a reality.

Ulises’s early departure is a great loss to the border studies community both in the Asian and Global South contexts. This paper on my general view on (national) borders is devoted to imagining the work he would have done, and to encourage someone to proceed in place of him.

What are Borders?

What do readers think of when they hear the word “national border”? Do they visualize a physical line drawn between one nation and another? A fence drawn over grasslands and hills? A threshold over which one cannot cross? Primarily they must visualize a single visible line. However, in reality border lines are not always visible. Consider for instance, the borders of my country, Japan. It is well-known that many Japanese people lack a sense of national borders; however, this is because no imaginary lines separate us from other nations. Only the endlessly expanding ocean surrounds us. Thus, the space surrounding Japan seems to extend to infinity.

However, the invisible border is not limited solely to the ocean. There are mountains as well. A mountain ridge naturally serves as a national border; however, even those living nearby cannot see it. It would be difficult to build a fence across a mountain several thousand meters tall. People far from the border tend to think of lines on maps, or fences as borders preventing entry to foreigners.

Further, let us consider rivers and lakes. If the other bank cannot be seen, people are

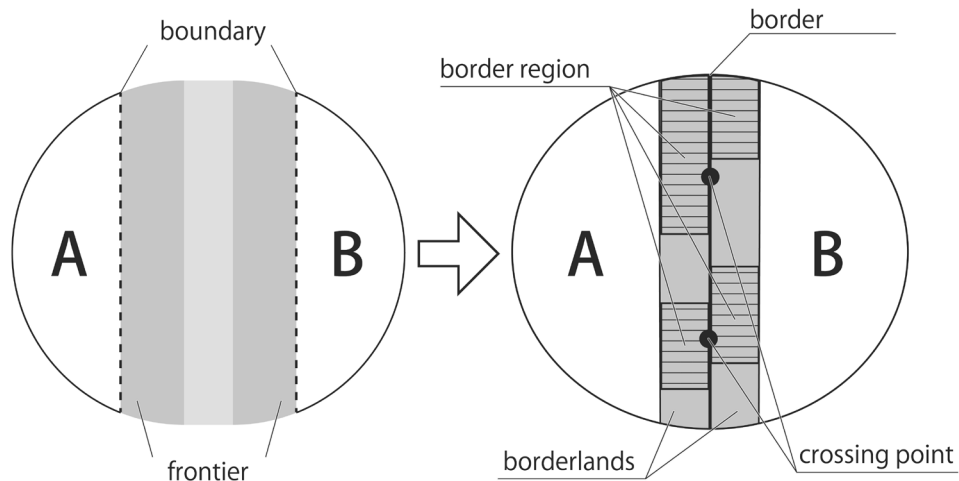
unlikely to be aware of any line. Standing on one's side of the bank, the river/lake stretching across would seem like the ocean. However, if there were people living on the other side of the river/lake, it would make one conscious of the boundary between us and them. This is all the more evident if one could see it. With lakes and rivers, even oceans, a boundary comes into existence once we become aware of the other side. However, whether this can be called a national border is another matter, one that we discuss later.

Additionally, what about the sky? Human life was, for a long time, conducted between two dimensions on the surface of the Earth; therefore, previous generations never considered dividing the sky. However, the development of airships and airplanes forced us to consider boundaries in the sky. Naturally, this eventually leads to considering boundaries in outer space. The meaning of oceans has also changed along with developments in science and technology. Originally, there was no idea of creating a boundary at the bottom of oceans and fencing it in. That only happened after it became possible to exploit the depths of oceans. Simultaneously, this has led to efforts to cordon off even more of the resources within and on the surface of the sea. If technological progress develops people's lives, that space will expand. Subsequently, that space will encounter other spaces. Thus, boundaries are created in the three dimensions of land, sea, and sky.



Globe at Hokkaido University Museum

Look at the Earth from space. There are no boundaries to be seen. There are boundaries distinguished by natural features such as mountains, rivers, and oceans. In the past, borders were often established on the basis of these natural features. However, the expansion of human-managed space surpassed these natural boundaries. A small entity develops, and subsequently annexes and conquers neighboring countries and societies as spaces that are “uninhabited.” The space located on the extending edge of the state is called the “frontier.” When the frontier is incorporated by a state, its boundary extends farther and farther outward. The disappearance of the frontier occurs when nations collide in the process of expansion. The bound formed by the collision of two expanding things—this is a boundary. Therefore, when physically expressing borders between countries, “boundary” is the preferred term.



Disappearance of the Frontier and Birth of a Border

However, in this paper, I would like to use the word “border.” This is because it can express both the physical and conceptual meaning. In general, borders conjure up images of a single space divided by many lines. In other words, this is predicated on the quintessential human capacity to draw lines anywhere in space, and in any way. First, let us consider physical borders. After a given state is created, subsequently expanding, it often finally disintegrates. What arises from this is not so much a boundary as a newly drawn border. Conversely, when one space is integrated with another space, that border may disappear. Of course, this border moves or changes and may occur due to political dynamics; however, border changes can also be performed to manipulate populations. For example, the division of colonies by empires, which often became borders after those colonies achieved independence, was nothing more than the creation of borders by the colonial rulers in defiance of local conditions, thus creating unrest in these regions.

This is a good example of how human perception creates new borders. International law is an invention of the human mind, and as such, changes with the times. For instance, consider the case of the ocean. The border of a country used to be considered up to three or even twelve nautical miles out into the sea, with only the high seas beyond that. However, what is the current situation? Various lines of power have been drawn with the introduction of the Convention on the Continental Shelf and exclusive economic zones (EEZs). These cannot be called borders in the traditional sense; however, they are clearly lines that could be called quasi-borders, where the exercise of national power extends to certain matters. The extension of these lines, and the fabrication of this new character of line, are all the products of the human imagination.

In summary, actual, physical borders and representational borders based on human perception have a close relationship with each other. Moreover, instead of actual, physical borders, postmodern scholars who seek to overcome and critique modernity see the world in terms of representational borders and the ideas and discourses that surround them. Indeed, if physical borders and boundaries are not determined solely by power relations, but by interacting

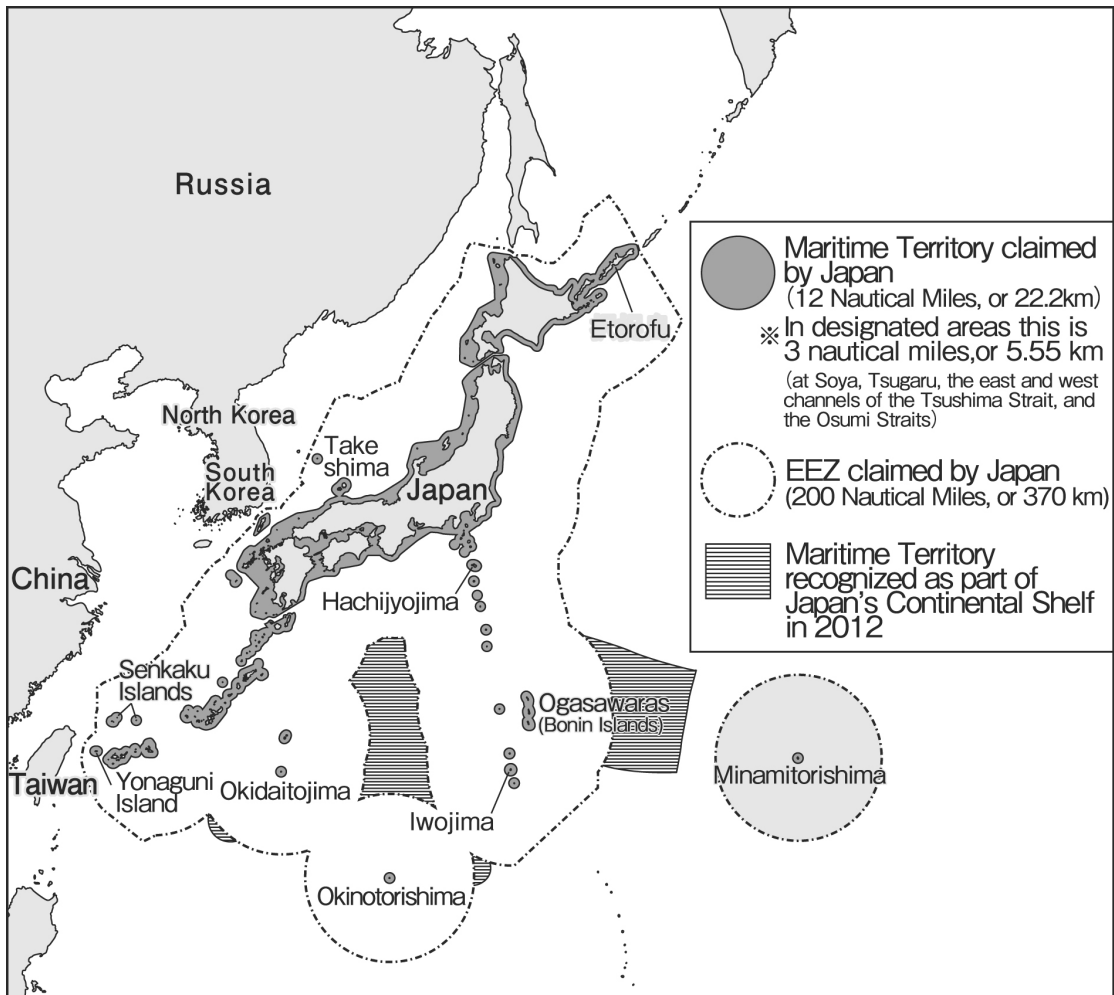
societies, then claims to their legitimacy will naturally strengthen the extent to which they are constructed within societies. Even with physical borders, lines drawn in rivers and seas cannot be seen. This is all the more evident if these lines are borders born from the human mind. Here, borders can be classified as either visible or invisible. Furthermore, if the border encloses a space, the enclosed space has a width, and if it encloses the sky or a space under the ground (or in the depths of the ocean), the space can even be three-dimensional. In other words, borders are not just simple lines, but areas with breadth; in other words, borders can be considered a framework for borderlands.

When borders are drawn freely in space, and when they are lines of power drawn and managed by the state, relations between the states often leads to confrontation and conflict. If the international order prior to the twentieth century allowed for disputes to be resolved through war, then the situation was such that the movement of borders occurred as a result of war, if not due to coercion by powerful countries (monetary transactions also played a role in this regard). This movement of borders was not the simple drawing of a line, but rather the transfer of space. This is termed as a territorial dispute. Setting aside distant colonial territories of empires, it is worth noting here that territorial disputes have often occurred between neighboring countries. I would illustrate a Japan case here: Japan is embroiled in legal disputes over national claims to sovereignty over the Northern Territories (Southern Kuril Islands), Takeshima, and Senkaku Islands; these disputes in turn lead to questions of where and how to draw borders, both physically and figuratively[4].

Territoriality in Japan's Borderlands

When a border is situated as a problem of partitioning space, it becomes a subject for geography. By using this analytical framework, discussed in detail below, it becomes possible to compare and correlate territorial conflicts as disputes over space. Territorial disputes typically tend to occur due to politically motivated behavior such as emphasizing the ahistoricity and uniqueness of one's claims to territory, making them absolute, and in doing so, rejecting dialog with others and dramatically highlighting one's own righteousness. However, a comparison of territoriality can clarify that most disputes are neither as absolute nor unique as assumed by the involved parties.

Another significant issue to consider when thinking about borders in space is the ability of nations to share the abovementioned framework of borderlands. In a sense, it is an oppositional relationship, similar to the center/periphery or capital/regional relationship of a state. However, since the focal point of opposition is the boundary of space, it becomes possible to treat this interstice between national borders as its own territory. In other words, viewing borders not as lines but as expanses makes it possible for practical challenges of politics and economy to be tackled at specific borderlands. For example, the introduction of special zones into lands facing national borders and multi-layered immigration controls divided by space (e.g., implementation of visa exemptions limited to border areas) are commonplace not only in Europe and the U.S. but also in Eurasia and Asia. There has also been considerable discussion of collaboration and cooperation between spaces that straddle national borders, that is, between border regions (for example, the concept of twin cities).



Japan's Borderlands and its Maritime Zone
(Cited from Iwashita, *Japan's Border Issues*)

In Japan, for example, this manifests in distinct, specific themes, such as how to support and promote remote borderlands such as Tsushima Island, 50 kilometers away from the Korean Peninsula, and Yonaguni Island, 100 kilometers away from Taiwan; how to promote cross-border economic and social cooperation; and how to ensure sustainable regional development in places such as Fukuoka (Kyushu) and Busan (Korea), or Wakkanai (Hokkaido) and Sakhalin (Russia). It is precisely because Japan lacks an awareness of borders and boundaries that it is necessary to actively study a variety of advanced cases in Europe and the U.S., compare them, and consider their applicability to Japan. This is one of the most important social contributions that border studies can contribute a precise understanding of Japan's border landscape for all.

One significant aspect of discussions based on comparisons of space is that they are not so attached to the specific wording of claims to demarcated borders. For example, the city of Nemuro in Hokkaido is referred to as "the origin of the Northern Territory Reclamation

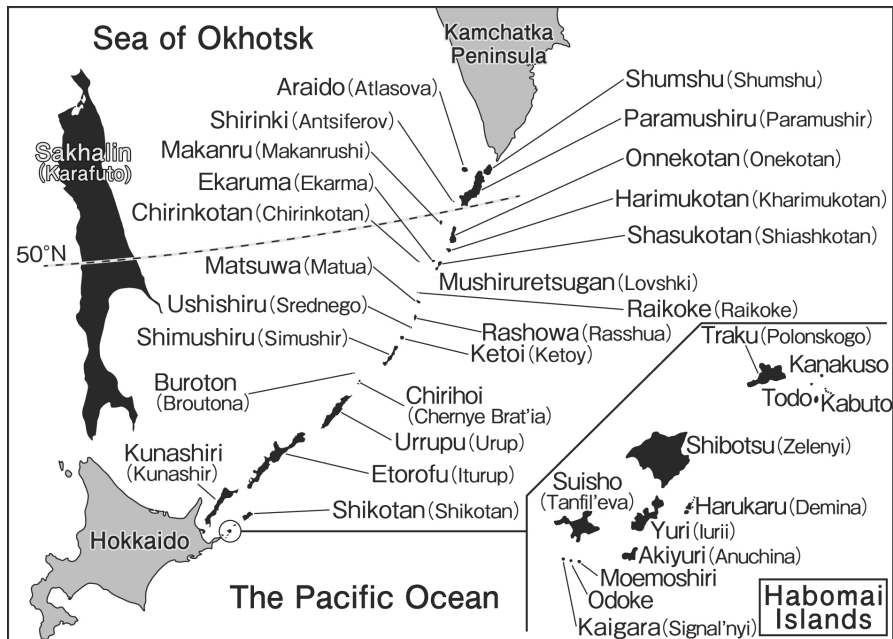
Movement”; however, terming Nemuro as a “national border town” or “borderland” continues to be officially prohibited. The reason given for this by officials is rather eccentric. They state that Nemuro cannot be termed a “national border town” because the official government position is that Japan’s border lies north of Etorofu Island.

However, this view is doubly mistaken. First, from the standpoint of spatial theory, when a state does not have effective control over its territory, the borderline that appears there has the function of a de facto border, even if it cannot be called a “national border.” In short, the space controlled by the national power of Japan is cut off at Nemuro, with the other side controlled by another power. The reluctance to call that line a “national border” is understandable; however, no matter how it is described, Nemuro is still a de facto “border town.” The second mistake is the assumption that borders are lines. The expression “borderlands” means a space that has its own unique character owing to the presence of borders. Even if calling it a “border town” is a forbidden act, it is not wrong to describe Nemuro as a “border region.” In fact, Nemuro is considered the “mother city” of the Northern Territories, the four Northern Island regions of which are recognized as one region. Using the insights of border studies allows one to quickly spot false claims such as these.

A side note about Nemuro: the Nemuro example provides a good chance to learn about maritime borders, that is, national borders formed by the sea. Kaigara Island is located 3.7 kilometers from Cape Nosappu in Nemuro. While in theory it is within a swimming distance (though practically impossible due to rough seas), and while the line itself cannot be seen, it is one of the few spots in Japan where the border can be visualized. Of course, there are no fences, nor any physical barriers separating these spaces. In reality, however, anyone attempting to cross that line will be arrested by Russian soldiers and possibly even shot. Locals describe it as an “invisible wall.” When the “invisible wall” is “visualized” with words, a new spatial comparison becomes possible. Unlike the other islands of the Northern Territories, the Habomai Islands have historically and administratively always been a part of Nemuro City. Hence, the existence of a “wall” between Habomai and Nemuro means that the originally unified space was divided, placing it in the category of divided cities. The reality here is similar to the “Berlin Wall.” From this viewpoint, one can see the lives of people who are blocked by “walls.” Thus, the sphere of people’s lives is torn apart by the formation and movement of borders. How different this scene must look from the old territorial disputes over sovereignty.



Habomai Islands as a Part of Nemuro City with Nosappu Cape



Japan's Borderlands and its Maritime Zone
(Cited from Iwashita, *Japan's Border Issues*)

The story does not end here. Regardless of the question of disputed areas, it may be possible to discuss correlations between Nemuro and Wakkanai, Tsushima, and Yonaguni (which have no disputed land) if we compare these spaces as border areas. If the existence of some kind of “wall” is a common characteristic of border regions, discussing this from the perspective of the local residents gives rise to the following research subject: “people living on the border.” Based on its interdisciplinary richness, the field of border studies can then, so to speak, return its results to these people via practice.

Thus far, I have attempted to sketch the landscape of the subject through discussions of boundaries and borders via examples I consider most relevant. However, studies of borders have been accumulating organically well before I encountered them and discovered the overlap with our work, and even before I discovered the category of border studies. These traces of studies of borders in other fields are diverse and cannot be neatly summarized, nor have they yet been properly organized and shared with the research community. Nevertheless, I wish to present my own categorization of this academic field to enable readers to understand its background and scope.

Development of a “Study of Borders”

How are national borders decided and drawn in the first place? Research on physical boundaries has its origins in Europe. The Westphalian system, in which lines were drawn through space by the concept of sovereignty, and power ruled exclusively within those spaces, was created in Western Europe. The people who live in the space enclosed by the boundary are represented as “citizens”; the rules applied within this space are standardized; and those who do not conform to these rules are eliminated as “outsiders,” or assimilated. In terms of international relations,

equality with neighboring spaces is guaranteed, and how those boundaries are determined and maintained becomes the story of the birth of borders. Insofar as international law defines national borders, research on borders begins in this area. In other words, to the extent that physical boundaries shape space in geography, and in the sense that research on international law begins with the determination of rules, it was a natural progression for border studies to take geography as its mother and international law as its father. It is because of this historical background that most academics and experts who study borders have been geographers, and international law practitioners are responsible for the practice of knowledge obtained from border studies. Thus, the process by which the concept of national borders spread throughout the world is what underpins this research community.

The International Boundaries Research Unit (IBRU)[5] was created in 1989 to bring together diplomats and experts from around the world to accumulate skills and provide training on a variety of subjects, ranging from the concept of borders to how to chart maps and draw lines, whether on land, river, or sea, and over various terrains. According to Martin Pratt, a long-time practitioner and director of the organization, the concept of boundary-making was created by Thomas Holdich in 1916, but that it was Stephen Jones' classic work, *Boundary-Making: A Handbook for Statesmen, Treaty Editors and Boundary Commissioners*[6], that gave it substance. In fact, Stephen Jones was deeply involved in the practice of border demarcation in the period between World War I and World War II. According to him, the process of determining borders is divided into four stages: allocation, delimitation, demarcation, and administration. After its establishment, IBRU collected detailed examples of each of these processes and compiled techniques for demarcating space with boundaries. The accumulation of experience by members of IBRU in drawing the lines of the world may be due in part to the legacy of the British Empire that had ruled many colonies on the globe; however, the character of Durham, near the Scottish border, must have also given them a strong sense of the issues involved.

IBRU's strength may lie in the fact that while many European institutions and researchers tend to focus on terrestrial areas (e.g., the French are knowledgeable about border demarcation in West Africa, while German and Russian geographers have deep knowledge and strong interest in Asian land areas, etc.), IBRU also excels in analyzing maritime areas. According to IBRU, there are 26 disputes involving islands worldwide; of these, Japan is involved in three territorial disputes: the Northern Territories, Senkaku Islands, and Takeshima. Their reports also include analyses of the legal advantages of the nations concerned in each case, and they demonstrate a high degree of knowledge about the Arctic and Antarctic. For example, the Arctic EEZ partition map is highly regarded as being prescient of the "Fifty/Fifty" dispute between Russia and Norway.

Because of its style of resolving political disputes and organizing practical discussions about rationally drawn lines, IBRU's work can in some ways be considered classically positivist: their research considers borders to be real physical entities. However, their positivist approach is not limited to drawing borders. Administration is the final step in Jones' definition, meaning that border issues do not end with demarcation. For example, the border demarcation process for North and South America was largely completed in the nineteenth century (with the exception of a few disputed territories); however, the practical problems of border control became a prominent theme in North America thereafter. Specifically, managing the movement of people along the U.S.-Mexico border has become a major challenge for practitioners. Therefore, in a somewhat different context than the establishment of IBRU, North American researchers from

New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, and San Diego in southern California have formed a study group to discuss North American border issues. Thus, the U.S.-Mexico border is the birthplace of the Association for Borderlands Studies (ABS)[7], which was established in 1976.

As a counterpoint to the trend of studying the problems of physical borders, a research group evolved that sought to find the problem of borders in human activities, rather than in physical conditions per se. This followed the development of critical thought and critical research rooted in the deconstructionist thinking prevalent in Europe (which assumes that one's own activities always break down old structures and create new ones), and was triggered by the transformation of geography, especially political geography. After World War II, political geography sought to elucidate and theorize a spatial order divorced from human will and action. However, after being criticized in the 1970s for its "absence of humans," in the 1980s it adopted a critical approach and evolved into a discipline that delved deeply into the relationship between space and power. In doing so, various spatial comparisons were made about how territoriality becomes the source of power and, conversely, defines power. However, before World War II, and in some countries even after the war, this was discussed within the context of geopolitics and military science to justify the expansion of territory and its ideological nature. It tended to be understood as a political approach to spatial control and associated with the establishment of order by power. Specifically, the reason political geography in Japan is said to be in a "state of catastrophe" is that it became a servant of militarism pre-World War II; the field has since been avoided by researchers throughout the postwar period as positivist tendencies in geography have intensified. On the other hand, in the West, a trend of questioning new findings and approaches to political geography from a critical standpoint emerged, giving rise to studies on boundaries and borders that attempt to relativize the power of the state; these studies subsequently influenced the aforementioned studies on representations of boundaries, popularly termed as mental border studies.

European critical researchers' sensitivity to border and boundary issues has been greatly stimulated by the disintegration of the EU's extraterritorial borders, especially the socialist bloc of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The collapse of the Berlin Wall, the changes in Eastern European nations, the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the associated civil war, the separation of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, simultaneously resulted in the following three phenomena: the loss of boundaries and the birth of boundaries, called de-bordering and re-bordering, respectively, and the crossing of boundaries, all through the scrapping and rebuilding of states. Border studies, as a community, shares the term "bordering," which, through its overlap with ordering, provides a context for the analysis of transformations and collapses of order as "de-bordering," and the birth of new nations as "re-bordering." Existing borders, too, are constantly being affected by the transgression of borders, or "trans-bordering," that leads to new boundaries. In addition to the crossing and integration of existing boundaries, where existing spaces have been severely broken down and new territorializations occur, different boundaries have reappeared. Scholars accustomed to the permanence of Cold War-ordered space thus began to become enthusiastic about border studies. Above all, it was also a shock that these phenomena occurred with sequences of time by occurring in parallel across various spaces. The integration and separation of spaces simultaneously and intricately repeats as a generative process. This was the social reality that emerged after the Cold War.

These phenomena brought the classic problem of border demarcation back into the spotlight while questioning the mental aspects of boundaries and borders, including how people

have projected meanings onto borders in society, as well as the meaning of social construction. This has led to studies in this field finding resonance with a North American border studies community that had begun to accumulate knowledge on the critical mental borders of U.S. power, as seen from the Hispanic and Mexican viewpoint. It is no coincidence that North American researchers have begun to participate in the Border Regions in Transition (BRIT) [8] network, which was founded in Europe and held its first meeting in Berlin to explore the implications of the fall of the “wall.” Playing key roles at this time were Pertti Joenniemi of Finland; James W. Scott, a leading political geographer in both the U.S. and Germany; and Paul Ganster, a leading U.S.-Mexico border researcher in San Diego and a founding member of the ABS. This research exchange and personal relationship between the U.S. and Europe indicates a landmark period of transformation for the border studies community. Middle Eastern scholars such as David Newman, who studied physical border studies at IBRU, joined BRIT, which held its fifth conference in Israel and Palestine, expanding its scope. The Ninth Congress, held in 2007 on a border region between the U.S. and Canada, brought together many North American researchers and strengthened the ABS-BRIT “alliance.” This event was my entry point to this research field.

Various Border Stories

Positivist research is often criticized by Western scholarly groups focused on representational studies and social construction; critical geopolitical theorists also criticize positivist research as considering boundary issues only from the vantage point of power and the state. For example, while it is illegitimate to view the work of IBRU as mere remnants of colonialism just because the UK has accumulated a mass of examples from around the world, the approach of actors who view these issues from the perspective of the state is incompatible with that of groups that adopt the approach of postmodernity or criticality, whether in dispute resolution or line drawing. In contrast to the constructionists who constitute the mainstream positivist researchers in Europe, Serghei Golunov, who analyzed trans-bordering disputes between Central Asia and Russia in Volgograd, Russia, and developed research regarding the issue of border management between Europe and Russia through his stays in San Diego, Durham, Estonia, and elsewhere, emphasizes positivist interpretations by focusing on the practical aspects surrounding Russia; however, he has not been well received within the European context, with his strong tendency to think in terms of “peaceful borders.” There are European border studies groups located in Nijmegen, near the German border in the Netherlands; Joensuu, east of Finland and near the Russian border; and, Grenoble, France—all of which are dominated by constructionist currents.

However, though European researchers maintain a postmodern orientation, when their approach is considered by researchers outside of Europe, there are many doubts as to whether this postmodern approach can be really sustained. The Asian Borderlands Research Network (ABRN)[9], centered in Amsterdam, consists of a group of researchers who draw from fields such as anthropology and geography to conduct fieldwork in the region; however, its organizational methods are, to a large extent, controlled top-down from Europe. Their discovery of James C. Scott’s “Zomia,” a self-sustaining and de-nationalized community of Southeast Asian mountain peoples in the border regions, led them to reorient their borderlands research; ABRN was established to lead research on the whole of Asia. However, it seems not to have full capacity to penetrate into the East Asian research community throughout Eurasia—from Russia, China and Japan, and so on, where there are large linguistic and regional differences.

Presently, they are developing well on various “Asias” but still focus more on empirical studies on “Asian borderlands” not necessarily on the theoretical progress of border studies itself and in comparisons and correlations with other regions except “Asia.”

Similarly, the African Borderlands Research Network (ABORNE)[10] is a research network based on anthropology and area studies that focuses on Africa. This network is led by Edinburgh researcher Paul Nugent. Compared to India and Southeast Asian countries, which already have a sufficient number of independently organized research groups, here it seems unavoidable that Europe would lead the way, given the difficult divergence within Africa based on various colonized paths, from which independent research groups have not yet emerged. However, here as well, closer collaboration with area studies in Francophone Africa and its positioning within a global context will prove essential. This network’s active participation in the June 2014 ABS World Congress (Finland and Russia) was certainly an opportunity for the expansion of this new community. BRIT XVI was organized by African researchers headed by Willie Eselebor in Nigeria with great success in 2018.

Finally, the enlargement reach of the ABS should be noted: special sessions were held in India in 2015 and in New Zealand in 2016. The ABS World Congresses have also developed: the second one in Vienna and Budapest in 2018 and the third one in Israel in 2023.

Harder or Softer?

Each region has its own history, situation, culture, and people. Outstanding achievements in historical and area studies are often discussed in terms of their one-time or unique nature. Geographical knowledge, in contrast, starts from the ability to compare all spaces. Is it really possible to combine the various border situations in North America and Europe, as well as all the related research? At first glance, it seems difficult to compare Eurasia and Asia with North America and Europe, as in the former, borders cannot be demarcated and conflict phenomena appear everywhere. In fact, when Mexican researchers are shown Japan’s border issues, or Russian researchers visit Southeast Asian border regions, they report observing differences alone.

And yet, there are examples where such impressions have been overcome. There are, for instance, the arguments of researchers from the Middle East region, especially Israel, which, with its close proximity to Europe, still bears the imprint of colonial rule. These researchers are critical of Western, especially postmodern, arguments—that is, analyses that emphasize boundaries not as physical but as social constructions, fabricated by human minds. For example, Anssi Paasi, who leads the constructionist current of border studies in Finland, is a pioneering researcher who has read the Russian-Finnish border region in a multilayered way by using its representations as subject matter; however, his reports always create an image of the border as if it can be manipulated freely in the human mind. An Israeli researcher who was asked about this, began to vehemently criticize Paasi, asking, what is the actual contribution of constructing such “peaceful borders” over and over again? He further stated that the reality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the Middle East cannot be changed. Scholars of border disputes in Asia and Eurasia will certainly derive satisfaction from such a claim. Of course, as seen in the debate over whether to call this barrier a “wall” or a “fence,” Middle Eastern scholars are sensitive to the symbolism and mental connotations of boundaries. This means that even if the conflict is unresolved, and even in pre-demarcation spatial situations, as long as there is a border, and especially if this border is permanent, it is easy for people to project their ideas onto the border

and construct various stories. In essence, this raises for us the question of how important it is to overlay the social construction dimension onto the physical boundary issue when thinking through these problems.

In fact, especially since the end of the Cold War, some Eurasian border disputes that seemed irreconcilable have been resolved, and some unresolved disputes have stabilized. The most prominent example is the Sino-Russian border region, which inherited the Sino-Soviet border dispute. With the completion of border demarcation, the debate has begun to shift to how to manage this border and border regions. Some questions include: How to preserve the environment of the border river Amur? How to manage Chinese cross-border migration? How to mitigate deep-seated mental conflicts between Chinese and Russians? How to establish a border trade that connects the region? How to develop regional and local economic cooperation across the border? And so on. If we consider similar issues, we can see that there are many cases where the experience of the U.S.-Mexico border region and the EU could be useful. That said, in contrast to the reduction of national border disputes on the Eurasian continent, maritime disputes are on the rise. Could it be argued that the borders of Eurasia will never stabilize? Yet an analysis that de-bordering and re-bordering proceed simultaneously in a variety of forms is also a primary finding from European border studies. Hence, even if there are differences in the justification for and degrees of conflict, there is no reason to assume, for example, that it is “unique” to Asia. Moreover, as a matter of fact, Asian conflicts seem no less serious than those between Israel and Palestine.

A frame of reference for organizing this transcontinental boundary phenomenon is Jones’ process analysis of borders discussed above. Let’s organize the four stages of allocation, delimitation, demarcation, and administration as a timeline. Conflicts in certain parts of Asia are only in the preliminary stages, while others, such as Sino-Russian relations, have entered the post-demarcation stage. Various subdivisions could be made in administration; however, if the flow from North America to the EU is along the lines of interdependence and integration, it is possible that these cases can be referenced. Furthermore, it is necessary to keep in mind that a border line does not always move forward. A close examination of knowledge that was reaffirmed after the end of the Cold War reveals that (b)ordering not only simultaneously causes de-bordering and re-bordering, as already mentioned, but this phenomenon also reverses the timeline. An integrated region may be once again divided by boundaries.

To the extent that re-bordering means that once-formed lines break and reappear in different spaces, it is theoretically possible for any region with peaceful and stable boundaries to break down and return to conflict. Of course, because human behavior is conducted with reference to history, those wishing to not repeat past mistakes may contribute to preventing conflict. Conversely, if human psychology was reconstructed in some manner, the possibility remains that conflicts would intensify as revenge for the past. The validity of the timeline is not based on the theory of development stages, but rather in its capacity to make us aware of the long-lasting and never-ending chain of events in which a border dispute, even if it is in the demarcation and administration stage, can nevertheless return to the initial stage if the border is broken down by political conflict. Furthermore, if the experience of conflict becomes more predictable across spaces, it will be easier to opt for deterrence than for escalation; in other words, learning from the mistakes of others may lead to further innovations in the management of borders. If we liken it to the techniques of geography, the scale of border studies, so to speak, always “scale-jumps” from small politics to big politics.

“Four Stage” Timeline and Permeability

Another aspect to consider when comparing borders is the discussion of what borders do and do not allow through. It may be easier for readers to understand this if it is expressed as a kind of filtering based on boundaries. Oscar Martinez in his famous book, *Border People: Life and Society in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*[11] (1994), presents four interesting types in this regard. Martinez’s argument for demarcating borders in terms of alienation, coexistence, interdependence, and integration is related to the characterization of border regions discussed below, but it is also a typology of the membrane of the border itself.

Let us compare some examples from around the world based on the Martinez model. A fully integrated region no longer has boundaries within; it is a “boundary” only to the extent that it is a point of passage for people and things. With the integration of EU countries, the former borders that functioned within the EU have lost their meaning. If the maximum permeability of things and people is guaranteed, the character of the region as a border region will surely fade. Conversely, the increased permeability of the EU’s internal borders makes the management of the EU’s external borders a weighty problem. The questions of who to allow passage, and what to let pass, form the crux of the matter. The finding here is that the boundaries are, so to speak, shifting. Indeed, the birth of integrated regions (territorialization) can create new boundaries, each with its own characteristics, such as alienation, coexistence, and interdependence. The enlarged boundaries of the EU may be at the stage of coexistence or interdependence, but the level of permeability differs in the south and east. Specifically, African and other immigrants are pouring in from the south, allowing for comparisons with the problem of Mexican immigration on the North American border.

Borders are filtering mechanisms. As long as national borders are long lines, their permeability varies from place to place. A border that is militarily alienating in one place may allow for coexistence in another. The India-Pakistan border is generally in a state of severe conflict, but even so, the border between Lahore and Amritsar has been opened to third-country nationals, making it a tourist destination and an “open” place where traders engage in commerce with bags slung over their shoulders. The Pakistani side of the border area between Afghanistan and Pakistan, for example, from Peshawar to Jalalabad, is famous for being a federally administered tribal area that is not administered by the Pakistani government except for roads, but rather self-governed by the Pashtuns living in the area. Although it appears to be a strict military border, the same Pashtuns live on the Afghan side of the border, which was established during the British rule, and local Pashtuns can come and go relatively freely. In this way permeability varies from place to place, even along a single border, and even at some alienated borders, people living there can easily travel back and forth depending on the location. The Martinez analogy is useful, yet, without a fairly microscopic analysis that identifies not just the relationship between Country A and Country B, but regional and local characteristics and the permeability of people and goods at the borders of each region, it fails to hold up for global border comparisons. As such, border comparisons require fine-grained research operations, such as conducting daily examinations at the micro-level within a country for a national comparison, but also translating this into other micro-comparisons beyond the country, as well as into a macro-context beyond the country. Many studies have yet to reach the level of theory, with scholars making sweeping comparisons as well as generalizing and exaggerating micro-cases. Perhaps this is why so many researchers are attracted to the depth and potential of border studies

research.

In any case, comparisons and cross-references are useful, especially regarding issues related to administrative technical systems such as customs, immigration, and quarantine. Additionally, biometric authentication for border crossing, which has become common in recent years and is being promoted for worldwide adoption, is growing into a major research area within border studies. International sociology, which is centered on migration studies, is strengthening its ties with border studies because of the growing significance of mutually reassessing the meaning of transnational migration and borders that manage migration due to globalization, and because of the expected development of the function of border studies in the future.

Despite this, the relationship between migration studies and border studies is problematic to a certain extent. As long as immigrants are, so to speak, globalized actors who freely transcend space, it is difficult to speak of limitations of space. This is because tracking immigration in relation to space often forces researchers to target populations spread across the globe. The part of migration studies that has utility for border studies is when migrants' stay or residence is associated with space. Of course, if their final destination is known, then it is simple to make deductions; however, if it is only a waypoint composed of bounded spaces, then that can be taken up as well. If the permeability of the border carves out space, then immigrants penetrate from one space to dwell in another. For example, migrants from North Africa pass through the Mediterranean Sea and enter the EU by using Italy as an entry point. Russian travelers use Finland, where visas are easier to obtain, as a waypoint to travel to other EU countries. Refugees from Syria, who have been in the spotlight in recent years, travel from Greece to Hungary via Macedonia on their way to Germany; however, Hungary has built a fence inside the EU to prevent this. Functional differences at the border regulate the movement of immigrants. Similar cases can be analyzed in relation to specific spaces and boundaries, such as Mexicans crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, Vietnamese traveling from the Russian Far East to Europe, or the Chinese doing business in the Sino-Russian border region. Rather, if the movement of immigrants, which seems to be a borderless phenomenon, is actually regulated by borders, I believe that international sociology and border studies can look forward to a fruitful collaboration. In Japan, relevant studies are also emerging, such as those by Hideki Tarumoto, on the connection between borders and immigrants[12]. In the future, an increasing number of migration researchers and sociologists are sure to understand the usefulness of border studies.

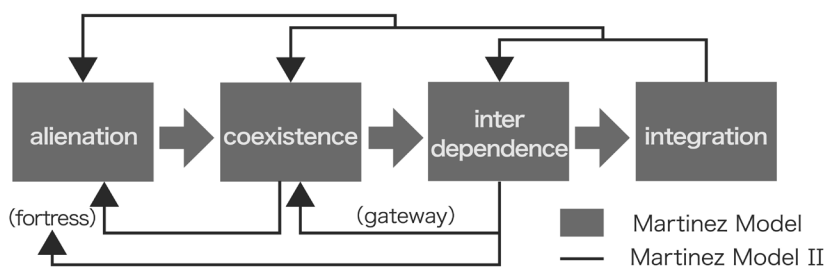
Reshaping Border Studies

Here, I would like to review three tools from border studies that I think are particularly useful. The first is the restructuring of timelines, the second is the transformation of permeability, and the third is the comparison of levels of social construction. I have already mentioned that Martinez classified the boundaries in four stages: alienation, coexistence, interdependence, and integration; however, he also modeled this as a shift from the former toward the latter. For him, the main reason why "alienated" borders, in other words, border areas that were only a kind of "fortress" on the frontlines of military conflicts, have acquired the character of peace and coexistence and interdependent characteristics that connect people, is the declining significance of national borders in terms of security. He asserts that economic globalization has also brought business opportunities to border regions, for example, the development of Mexico's maquiladoras (tariff-free import systems for raw materials, machinery, etc. for products for

export) under NAFTA.

In Martinez's model, in North America, the process of progress is seen as a progression from conflict over borders to demarcation, and subsequently to economic cooperation through NAFTA while dealing with border control, including immigration control; in Europe, the chronological progression of the creation of the European Community after World War II, specifically from the EEC to the EU; the conclusion of the Schengen Agreement, that liberalized the movement of people within the region; and, the introduction of a common currency, the euro, has long been understood to be a one-way progression from conflict to integration. However, as I have already mentioned, the contemporary global and regional order is not unilinear; regions stable in their interdependence can be suddenly cut off at the border and turned into the frontline of conflict. The phenomenon of returning to the "fort," so to speak, occurs frequently. The ongoing Ukrainian War since 2022 clearly demonstrates the "four stages" as reversible. Here, I propose the updated Martinez Model applicable for more various borderlands. The timeline construction (pattern analysis by time series and de-timelines of bounding phenomena) must be an essential analytical tool.

Another perspective for considering borders is trans-borderization. Border studies can be viewed in terms of a space, for example, a region; however, it is also possible to analyze the function of the border itself, which is usually treated as an object, by taking it up as a subject.



Transformation of Border Region Type

If the existence of a border can be understood to have the same function in any region, then it is possible to compare vertically and horizontally what the border membrane does and does not let through; when it lets something through and when it does not; and, even when it does let things through, to what extent and degree is its passage managed. This is permeability, which has its roots in physics.

The third is the method of comparing levels of social construction, which is a level analysis of human representational activities and their politics with respect to physical boundaries. Indeed, physical boundaries can be larger or smaller depending on their construction. I have been following the Sino-Russian border issue empirically for many years and have seen representations of the "Damansky/Zhenbao Island" dispute grow both larger and smaller in Sino-Soviet and Sino-Russian relations. In March 1969, the island, only roughly one square kilometer in size, suddenly became a battleground. Subsequently, it became a symbol of the Sino-Soviet conflict, and the people in this region were mobilized. On the other hand, after Perestroika, the two countries, aiming for reconciliation, rushed to resolve the border issue under the slogan of "Do not repeat the 'Damansky/Zhenbao Island' situation," and eventually succeeded. Currently, as the border issue has been completely resolved[13], only a few people

remember the name “Damansky/Zhenbao Island.” Thus, as evidenced above, it is interesting to position changes in social construction related to conflicts according to the era.

Border Studies, still in progress, has plenty of room to be developed both empirically and theoretically for future. I hope someone will follow in the footsteps of Ulises and succeed his will and endeavors, thus contributing to more a peaceful and stabilized world order.

[1] Takeshi Hamashita, “Memories of Ulises Granados as an Advisor in Japan” in the volume.

[2] Appendix “CV,” in the volume.

[3] Ulises Granados, “Mexico as a Buffer Zone between Central America and the U.S.: the Chiapas Border,” in the volume.

[4] Akihiro Iwashita, *Japan’s Border Issues: Pitfalls and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2015); “Special Section on Japan’s Borders and Borderlands,” *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 26-3 (2011).

[5] <https://www.durham.ac.uk/research/institutes-and-centres/ibru-borders-research/>

[6] Stephen Jones, *Boundary-Making: A Handbook for Statesmen, Treaty Editors and Boundary Commissioners* (Getzville: William S. Hein & Co, 2000). The first edition was published in 1945.

[7] <https://absborderlands.org/>

[8] <https://conferencealerts.com/show-event?id=199195> (the latest in 2018)

[9] <https://www.ias.asia/programmes/asian-borderlands-research-network>

[10] <https://www.aborne.net/>

[11] Oscar J. Martínez, *Border People: Life and Society in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994).

[12] For example, Hideki Tatumoto, “Why restrictive refugee policy can be retained? A Japanese case,” *Migration and Development* 8-1 (2019).

[13] Akihiro Iwashita, *A 4000 Kilometer Journey Along the Sino-Russian Border* (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 2004).

***This paper is an updated version from chapter II of Akihiro Iwashita, *Nyumon Kokkyogaku: Ryodo, Shuken, Ideology* [Introduction for Border Studies: Territory, Sovereignty, and Ideology] (Tokyo: Chuko Shinsho, 2016).**



Ulises Granados and Akihiro Iwashita in Comala, Mexico, 2016

Viewing a Rising China from South Korea and Thailand

Alexander Bukh

Dedication and Introduction

This paper, like the rest of the papers in this special issue, honours our good friend, Dr Ulises Granados, who passed away tragically in 2021. I first met Ulises in 2010 at a conference in Daejeon, South Korea, and we have been in touch ever since, organizing conference panels or just meeting for a drink when our paths crossed in countries such as Japan, Korea, Mexico, Australia, and New Zealand. My fondest memory with Ulises is our five days together in Mexico City, where he displayed exceptional kindness and generosity by showing me around the city, driving me to the pyramids and taking me to various spots in the city. During his visit to New Zealand, Ulises spent a few days with my family, staying at our house and sharing a bottle of tequila he brought from Mexico with us. After his departure, I recall my wife saying, “Ulises is welcome to stay with us any time, he is such a joyful person, it is such a pleasure to host him.” Ulises indeed had this incredible talent of bringing joy and a good mood wherever he went. It is still hard to imagine that he is gone forever, and I will never receive an email from him with a suggestion to organize a conference or to meet up in Japan—a country he truly loved and visited often.

As an academic, Ulises focused on China and its maritime issues and relationships with neighbouring nations. This paper continues his interest by examining the views of China in South Korea and Thailand. I use the methods of discourse analysis to examine the elites’ discourse on the two countries’ relations with China. I will also juxtapose the discourse deployed by the elites with other pieces of evidence. The results of this study suggest that the transformations in the elites’ discourse on China that occurred during the last two-three decades were mostly instrumental.

This comparative analysis focuses on South Korea and Thailand because there are certain important similarities in the two countries’ relations with China that make them particularly interesting for exploring and comparing their perceptions of China. Both share a long history of interactions with China under the tribute system. During the Cold War, both South Korea and Thailand were members of the U.S.-led camp and generally viewed communist China as a major threat to the regional stability. While the post-Cold War transformations in Southeast Asia have been more profound than those on the Korean Peninsula, both countries continued to maintain close security ties with the U.S., and, at the same time, over the last three decades, both have also developed a rather close relationship with China.

In the case of Thailand, trade with China grew exponentially during the post-Cold War years and in 2014 China overtook Japan to become Thailand’s top trading partner. Largely conflict-free and driven by mutual interests, political relations between the two countries have also improved significantly over the years, growing closer and warmer. Visits by top-level politicians are frequent and cooperation between the two countries is extensive. These relations became even closer after the 2014 coup, which was denounced by the U.S. and many other Western countries.

Similar developments can be also observed in South Korea’s relations with China. China’s diplomatic relations with South Korea have not been as smooth as with Thailand, with

issues related to North Korea, maritime disputes, and diverging interpretations of the ancient kingdom of Goguryeo often causing tensions. These disputes, however, have been managed relatively well by both governments, preventing them from causing significant long-term damage. In 2008, bilateral relations were upgraded to “strategic cooperative partnership” and overall, developed smoothly until the 2016 THAAD missiles related frictions. Economic exchanges between the two countries go back to the 1970s but bilateral trade has experienced a rapid growth since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992. In 2004, China became Korea’s largest overall trading partner, the top destination for Korean exports and second only to Japan in terms of imports.

The above shows that from the mid-2000s onward, China’s presence in both countries as well as bilateral relations have significantly deepened. This increasing thickness of bilateral relations has not been limited to trade but also manifested itself in the movement of people in both directions, making their relationship with China rather unique.

In terms of political regimes both Thailand and South Korea were governed by military-led dictatorships during the Cold War but from the late 1980s embarked upon a process of political democratization. Here the similarities end as the trajectories of their subsequent political developments took them into strikingly different directions. While certain problems remain, today’s South Korea is seen as one of the most vibrant democracies in the world, rated as “free” with a total “freedom score” of 83 by the Freedom House. In contrast, Thailand went through three military coups in the last three decades, with the most recent one launched in May 2014. Today, the Thai government is headed by a former leader of the junta that ruled Thailand for four years, and the military continues to play a decisive role in Thai politics and in shaping the public discourse. As such, Thailand took a direction opposite to the South Korean one, to a certain extent returning to its Cold War era style of governance. Not surprisingly, in 2020 Freedom House rated Thailand as only “partially free” with a total “freedom score” of 32.

Elite Discourse and Rising China

Thailand

The rise of China in the twenty-first century had an impact that went beyond the economic interests of the business elites but also on the ways the broader group of Thais of Chinese descent who by now, accounted for the majority of urban elites, viewed and expressed the ethnic element of their identity domestically. Namely, China’s emergence as an economic powerhouse legitimized pride in Chinese origins and many Thai businessmen and politicians of Chinese origin started to openly emphasize their Chineseness[1]. This new pride in the Thai Chinese identity was accompanied by the re-emergence of the elite discourse on Thai-China relationship as kinship, as a relationship between brothers.

The origins of the kinship discourse date back to the first half of the twentieth century but it was re-discovered by the Thai elites in late 1980s, after the normalization of bilateral relations, and since then has gained prominence in depictions of bilateral relations made by politicians, government officials and business elites. This discourse relies on the ethnic proximity between the two nations emphasizing the presence of a large Chinese ethnic minority in Thailand and the close historical ties between the two nations. References to Thailand-China relations as familial one can often be seen in the domestic media and in speeches at events that involve representatives from both countries. In a speech to celebrate the legacy of Kukrit Pramoj, Thailand’s former Prime Minister who established diplomatic relations with China in 1975,

another former Prime Minister, Anand Panyarachun[2], noted the omnipresence of the phrase “Thailand and China are brothers” in the Thai society and presented it as evidence of Kukrit’s legacy and success in drawing the two nations closer together. Wissanu Kreangam, Deputy Prime-Minister in Thaksin’s government (2002–2006), referred to Thailand’s relationship with China as a special one, “rarely seen among other countries,” based on close, family-like ties on all levels of society[3]. In 2005, Thaksin himself referred to Thai and Chinese as belonging to one family during a visit to his ancestor’s tomb in mainland China[4]. The prominence of the “kinship” narrative in Thai elite discourse on relations with China has remained intact despite the various political upheavals in the country. In October 2015, a year and a half after the coup that brought to power the military junta in Thailand, the two countries celebrated the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. During the celebration to commemorate the event, the phrase “Thailand and China are not strangers, but siblings” featured prominently in the speeches of many Thai officials including the Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai[5]. The reference to the brotherly relations between the two nations often features in speeches by the Thai officials directed at the Chinese audience as well. For example, one of the leaders of the junta, General Prawit Wongsuwan, used this phrase in a speech aimed at reassuring Chinese tourists about the safety of Thailand after the 2018 Phuket boat capsizing incident[6].

Some observers, however, argued that the discourse on kinship has been accompanied by a gradual importation of the Chinese authoritarian model to Thailand, pointing to the premiership of Thaksin Shinawatra as the starting point of this process[7].

Indeed, certain domestic and foreign policy developments during Thaksin’s rule support this argument. Thaksin adopted the “Asia for Asians” approach as the main pillar of Thailand’s regional policy and during his rule Sino-Thai relations became significantly closer. It was under Thaksin’s premiership that an FTA between the two countries was signed in 2003, and numerous regional and bilateral initiatives pushed the two countries closer together. In terms of domestic politics, Thaksin neither held democracy nor those that promoted it in high regard. His rule became increasingly authoritarian, leading to some observers referring to it as “parliamentary dictatorship[8].” However, the argument that along with other Chinese products, “Bangkok has imported Chinese authoritarianism”[9] which construes the growth of China’s positive image and Thaksin’s authoritarianism as essentially part of the same phenomenon seems to be exaggerated. It should also be remembered that while Thaksin was indeed becoming increasingly authoritarian, he was also very much a reformer who challenged traditional institutions, fought against the old elites, and enabled the emergence of new actors on Thai political arena[10]. Moreover, Thaksin explicitly rejected any ideology, arguing that in the post-Cold War era, politics were about proper management aimed at solving the country’s problems. When seeking to legitimize a certain policy, Thaksin, rather skilfully, made use of a whole range of ideas that suited his purpose at that moment to convince his audience. When arguing that the essence of the social contract theory was the sacrifice of individual freedom for the general good, he was quoting Rousseau. When justifying his harsh treatment of the opposition, Thaksin referred to the teachings of Buddhadasa—one of the most influential Thai Buddhist philosophers of the twentieth century[11]. Thus, the discourse about kinship with China, should be seen more as a framing device used by Thaksin to legitimize his policies domestically and to appeal to his Chinese counterparts.

The Chinese model of continuing economic growth combined with the suppression of individual freedoms has been found increasingly appealing by the Thai military that has ruled

Thailand since 2014. Now, calls for embracing the Chinese model were voiced openly by the Thai leadership. In 2016, the Thai press reported that during a Cabinet meeting, Prime Minister and the leader of the junta, General Prayut Chan-o-cha, recommended to his fellow Cabinet members to read Xi Jinping's *The Governance of China*, as both countries are going through a similar period of reforms. In 2018, Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak in an address to the Thailand-China Business Forum, explicitly stated that Thailand can learn from the Chinese model.

Like in the case of Thaksin, it is possible that the Chinese model has exercised a certain influence on General Prayut and associates but there is no definitive evidence to suggest that this indeed has been the case. In interviews with the domestic and foreign press, Prayut emphasizes his patriotism, makes references to Thai culture but never mentions China's influence on his political decisions. Indeed, his list of ten recommended books includes *The Governance of China* but also *Animal Farm* and several volumes on business management[12]. The emphasis on order, economic development and close relationship between the people and the government in the excerpts from the semi-autobiographical volume published by Prayut's party in 2019 for internal circulation[13] suggest certain similarities in Prayut's and Xi's worldviews. Similar ideas, however, can be found probably in writings by any other authoritarian ruler. Thus, it seems that rather than being influenced by the Chinese model, the 2014 coup as well as the subsequent political transformations implemented by the junta were driven by the desire to safeguard the political dominance of the royalist elites that include the military[14]. Just like earlier governments, therefore, the references to the Chinese model should be seen as a framing tool used to justify and legitimize the new rulers' domestic policies and to appeal to China.

South Korea

Since the early 2010s, numerous Korea watchers have argued that China's rise has brought back the historical Confucian tributary system values to the fore of bilateral relations and that South Korea is willingly embracing China as the new regional hegemon[15]. Earlier, a similar idea was voiced by David Kang[16] who suggested that the historical memory of friendly but hierarchical relations with China are integral to Korean national identity and play an important role in shaping bilateral relations. Jin Kai[17] referred to this element of Korean national identity as part of a "cognitive entanglement" espoused by Korean policymakers in which they are torn between two conflicting desires; one to uphold Korea's ties with the U.S., and the other to join's China in the construction of new order in East Asia, or "even to return to the long-gone tributary system as an inferior small neighbour." In other words, this view of bilateral relations suggests that the rise of China reactivated and brought to fore the "junior partner" or "vassal" element in Korean national identity.

Such claims were frequently made during the early years of Park Geun-hye's presidency (2013-2017). Park made efforts from the start of her presidency to enhance state-level relations and build good personal ties with China's leader Xi Jinping, leading to a brief period of close relations between the two countries. However, the relationship ended in mid-2016 after South Korea's decision to deploy the THAAD anti-missile defence system. Park held six summit meetings with Xi and visited Beijing three times in the first three years of her presidency. In 2015, Xi commented that the Korea-China relationship was at its best point in history[18].

During this time, the relationship between the two countries was strengthened by a shared memory of colonization and occupation by Japan. This was achieved through symbolic

measures like establishing memorials for the Korean anti-colonial struggle in China and Park Geun-hye attending China's Victory Day celebration in 2015. However, an examination of official documents and speeches by key policymakers during Park's presidency found no evidence to support the idea of a "junior partner" or "vassal" identity. Korean official documents, such as the annual Diplomatic White Paper, still emphasized the "common values" between Korea and the U.S. While acknowledging the strategic partnership with China, they did not mention any shared values. The working report submitted by Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to President Park a few weeks after her inauguration, which outlined the main issues and goals in Korea's foreign relations, noted the need to balance Korea-U.S. alliance with its partnership with China but neither explicitly nor implicitly referred to any common values or identities shared by the two countries[19]. Likewise, the Joint Statement on Korea-China Future Vision adopted in June, 2013, mentioned shared interests and referred to the two countries' working together towards peace on the Korean Peninsula and beyond, as well as other instances of cooperation, but carried no references to any normative commonalities[20]. To the contrary, during Park's presidency, South Korean politicians continued to emphasize their country's adherence to the principles of democracy and their belief in its universal applicability, including the Asia-Pacific region[21]. A search on Korea's National Assembly parliamentary interpolations' database during the nineteenth (2012–2016) and the twentieth (2016–2020) assemblies with keywords "Korea China common values," "Korea China Confucianism," "Korea China culture" did not bring any results relevant for this study.

Quotes from Chinese classics and references to cultural similarity and long history of cultural exchanges between the two nations are indeed occasionally made by Korean officials in their discussions with the Chinese officials, the public, and the media. Rather than expressions of a "junior partner" or a "vassal" identity, these should be understood as framing tools aimed at creating certain familiarity and commonality between the Korean "self" and the Chinese "other" while delivering a certain message. For example, when talking to the Chinese media, South Korea's ambassador to China, Noh Young-min, used a quote from Confucius to explain the existing difficulties in two countries' relations and the need to start from relatively minor issues to achieve an overall improvement[22]. Park Geun-hye herself extensively used quotes from Chinese classics at a speech she gave at Tsinghua University during her June 2013 "trip of heart and trust" to Beijing. She also emphasized the centuries long history of interactions between the two peoples and the cultural familiarity the Korean people, including herself, experience during their visits to China. Park also mentioned the "Chinese dream" and noted that Koreans are also pursuing the Korean dream. She did not, however, draw any parallels between the two nations, except for the vague "pursuit of happiness" by both peoples[23]. Such statements can hardly be interpreted as something more than a rhetorical device commonly used by politicians and diplomats aimed at showing respect and familiarity with the audience's culture. Moreover, it could be argued that precisely the lack of common values and identities makes historical and cultural references so important when Korean leaders attempt to establish certain proximity with the Chinese audience.

Conclusion

The above analysis of the elite discourse in Thailand and South Korea shows that in both cases the narrative on common history and culture is used instrumentally by the elites and can hardly be attributed to any perceived commonality in values or norms or China's ideational influence

on policy-making elites. In terms of the broad public, there is an abundance of public opinion polls tracing the dynamics of public attitudes towards China in South Korea and, to a lesser extent, in Thailand. In a nutshell, these surveys show that people in both countries see China as an important regional and global player which exercises growing influence in the region. The favourable/unfavourable attitudes towards China in South Korea have fluctuated greatly, depending on the state of bilateral relations. In the 1990s and early 2000s, these attitudes were mostly favourable, but during the Goguryeo-related historical controversy in the mid-2000s, and since the THAAD related tensions from 2017 onwards, the unfavourable view gained dominance.

Polls related to Thai public perceptions are rather scarce but those that exist, suggest that during the past two decades, the Thais have generally maintained a favourable view of China and see it as an important and positive external influence on their country and the region more broadly[24].

The above-mentioned polls consist of general questions about feelings towards a certain country or its influence, and do not offer any evidence regarding the ideational impact of the rising Chinese and its model. There are other sets of large surveys such as Asia Barometer and World Values Survey, which do not engage specifically in gauging public attitudes towards the Chinese model but nevertheless can offer some hints regarding possible identity shifts in the two countries. These were analysed elsewhere[25] and the analysis suggest that over the last few years, compared to the early 2000s, the public in both countries find authoritarian values more acceptable. These shifts can be attributed to a variety of domestic and global factors, unrelated to China, but we cannot ignore the possibility that the relationship between the rise of China on one hand, and the shift towards authoritarian values in South Korea and Thailand on the other, is not simply coincidental. We can conclude that the ideological challenge of the Chinese model should be taken seriously by proponents of democracy in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

[1] Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, *Thaksin* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2009), 11–12.

[2] Anand Panyarachun, *Kanpoetsamphanthamaitri thaichin khong marawa khuekrit pramoj [Kukrit Pramoj's Opening of Thai-China Friendship]* (Bangkok: Hundred Years since the Birth of M.R. Kukrit Pramoj. Kukrit Institute, 2011). [http:// www.anandp.in.th/th_speech/t_china2.html](http://www.anandp.in.th/th_speech/t_china2.html)

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***This paper is an updated digest from Alexander Bukh, “The productive power of rising China and national identities in South Korea and Thailand,” *The Pacific Review*, 35-4 (2022), 676–704.**



Ulises Granados and Alex Bukh at IPSA World Congress in Brisbane, 2018

“Too Foreign for Here, Too Foreign for Home”: The Korean Diaspora and “Returning” Nikkei Brazilians in Japan

Hyunjoo Naomi Chi

Preface

This paper is dedicated to my dear friend and colleague, Professor Ulises Granados Quiroz, who was taken away from us suddenly in 2021. He was one of my friends that I looked up to (in Japanese we have a word “senpai,” which means mentor), who finished his post-graduate degree in Japan and paved the way for foreign scholars in Japan. He was always concerned with stability and peace in East Asia, and though his expertise was on Sino-Japanese relations, he was always attentive to various issues including migration, minorities and social inclusion in East Asia. This article stems from a paper that I originally prepared for a panel I organized at the International Political Science Association (IPSA) conference in Brisbane, Australia, in 2018, where Professor Granados eagerly agreed to sit as a discussant. At the time of the conference, it was still a work in progress, but since then I have developed it into this article, which I would like to dedicate to my friend, Professor Ulises Granados. I would like to thank him for all his valuable comments that motivated me to finish this paper, but more than that, I want to thank him for his kindness, warmth, and friendship. I still cannot believe that he is not with us, but he still lives in our hearts and memories. In memory of Prof. Ulises Granados, *te extraño mi amigo*.

Introduction

The headline in the *Nikkei Asian Review*, “Foreigners in Japan hit record as Tokyo rolls out welcome mat” was one of the many similar articles that hit the internet in the latter half of 2019, a few months after Japan’s new legislation and revision to its immigration control law. The number of foreigners in Japan reached 2.83 million in 2019, which is an increase of 192,000 from the previous year. The increase in foreign workers in Japan is due to various reasons, but one of the major factors include the lack of labour from the shrinking of the working population, due to Japan’s rapid aging society and low birth rate. However, what is less known to the public is that the Japanese government’s ulterior motive is “to leverage immigration in its campaign to revitalize depopulated regions.”

Japan has long been regarded as a country with tight immigration control, and without an active migration policy. Even during the diet deliberation concerning the new legislation and revision to the immigration control law, Prime Minister Abe had repeatedly mentioned, “It is not our intention to implement an active migration policy. This policy is to accept foreign human resources for a fixed period as measures to fill in the serious lack of labour[1].” Moreover, he stated, “We do not intend to maintain our nation by bringing in foreign migrants and their families. Please do not confuse this policy as an active migration policy that encourages permanent settlement of foreign migrants[2].”

However, another lingering agenda has resurfaced in Japan—that is the issue of how to integrate generations of the “old comers” and “newcomers” to Japan. One of the largest migrant communities of old comers to Japan is the *Zainichi Korean* or the ethnic Koreans who came to Japan after the annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910 and stayed even after the end of the second World War. This paper will also look at how the Japanese government and the people are “struggling” to integrate those who have Japanese heritage, the *Nikkei Brazilians*

who have “returned” to Japan to find work, though, however, in recent years have sought to settle permanently in Japan.

This paper will first examine the brief history of Japan’s Immigration Control Law, the revisions to the law and the discussions and arguments that have resulted from this new revision. Secondly, the paper will discuss the various challenges that the Zainichi Korean and Nikkei Brazilians face today. Lastly, the paper will examine the various policies implemented by the central and local governments that have attempted to address the challenges but have not resulted in any major paradigm shift in terms of integrating foreign migrants to Japan.

New Legislation and Revision to the Immigration Control Law

On December 8, 2018, the Japanese parliament passed a controversial bill in the upper house to revise the immigration control law so that Japan could accept blue collar (non-skilled) workers, despite protests from the opposition party. The bill had already passed in the lower house in November. With the lack of details in many areas, including which business sectors will be allowed to hire foreign workers, how many will be accepted and whether they will be eligible for social services, the new law was rushed and enacted on April 1, 2019. The enactment of this new law came as a surprise as Japan has been regarded as not having an active immigration policy and the Japanese government has repeatedly announced that Japan will not accept blue-collar workers. This section will examine the background to the enactment of the new law, the content of the new law and what it entails, the potential challenges to this new law.

Background to the New Revision

Before the recent revision to the immigration control law, foreigners who could work in Japan can be categorized into the following: highly skilled workers or those with specified knowledge and professional skills (university professors, scientists, lawyers); people with certain legal positions such as foreign spouses married to Japanese nationals, people with Japanese heritage (Nikkei-Brazilians), and foreign permanent residents (Zainichi Koreans as well as those who obtained residency); people who engage in certain types of paid work based on bilateral agreements signed between Japan and related countries (care workers and nurses under the Economic Partnership Agreement); trainees on the Technical Internship Training Programme (TITP); and those who have obtained permission to engage in activities outside their immigration status (international students who work part-time).

The Japanese government implemented several new immigration statuses, including the trainee status and the long-term residency status for people with Japanese heritage, in its first ever revision to the immigration control law in 1990. The rationale behind the first revision was to compensate for the labour shortage that Japan was experiencing during its economic growth. Though the technical trainees were not considered to be “workers” to fill in the gap, but rather Japan’s way of transferring skills and technology to developing countries, in reality the trainees did fill in the labour shortage in unskilled work. Moreover, the long-term residency status was implemented to bring in the Nikkei-Brazilians who are looking for work in Japan, and even though there are no limitations on what type of work they can work in, many Nikkei-Brazilians work in less-skilled jobs such as assembly lines, factories and food services. In the 1990s, the labour shortage was mainly due to the segmented labour market in which many highly educated young Japanese people refused to work in low and less-skilled jobs.

However, in light of Japan becoming an aging society, Japan has implemented various

institutions to bring in foreign workers to its country, including the acceptance of care workers and nurses from Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam as part of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) in 2008, 2009 and 2014, respectively, and the Technical Intern Training Programme in 2017. These institutions enabled Japan to bring in care workers and nurses to compensate for the labour shortage particularly in the care industry, as well as continue bringing in technical interns (formerly the trainees) to work in unskilled work. The Japanese government was preparing for the actual coming labour shortage as the working population from the baby boomer generation was reaching retirement age.

Behind the latest revision and implementation of the new law is a strong push from certain business sectors in Japan that are suffering from a serious labour shortage due to not only the rapidly graying but also declining population[3]. Japan is experiencing an unusually low birthrate as it hit 1.26 in 2005 and recovering slightly at 1.42 in 2018. In 2017, the Cabinet Office announced that Japan has a shortage of 1.2 million in labour intensive industries such as food and hospitality services, manufacturing, construction, agriculture and fishing.

Challenges to the New Law

As mentioned above, one of the main reasons for implementing this new law was to fill in the acute labour shortage, but also to minimize some of the serious problems with TITP, such as long working hours, extremely low-wages, harassment and abuse. This is due to the lack of worker oversight; therefore, the new law will allow worker oversight to big private job-placement agencies that could manage large numbers of people more efficiently and professionally. Under the TITP, worker oversight was delegated to the chamber of commerce, trade union and agricultural cooperatives which some have pointed out that, “it put corporate profits first and are not fulfilling their oversight responsibilities.” However, even though the TITP has faced serious criticisms, the Japanese Government has announced to continue the program alongside the new visa statuses. It is still unclear as to how the Japanese government will manage the two programmes, how much improvement there will be with the new visa statuses and whether worker oversight will be further enforced.

The Japanese government has repeatedly announced that the revision and the implementation of new visa statuses are not the implementation of immigration policy nor accepting non-skilled workers, but to utilize talented and skilled human resources from abroad. Prime Minister Abe stated, “the entire country is short of workers, and the new system is needed for talented foreigners to further contribute to Japan” and that the government will “set clear caps on the numbers (of additional foreign workers) and limit the period (they can stay in Japan),” insisting that the new measures do not constitute a policy to accept foreign immigration[4]. The “non-existence” of an active immigration policy means that Japan still lacks not only the administrative and support structures but also has yet to implement policies for integrating foreign migrants to Japanese society. However, some have a more optimistic view of the new revisions. Mr. Toshiro Menju, Director of the Japan Centre for International Exchange, stated:

“This is a historic shift, worthy of being called ‘the year immigration began,’ and Japan is the only developed country without an immigration policy, and in that sense our stubbornness had reached its limit. The reason why the government does not refer to this as an immigration policy is due to concern for the negative image people have towards the word ‘immigration.’ The biggest success of this new policy was creating an opportunity for a national discussion

of immigration policy, which had been taboo until now. It would be necessary in the future to decide whether to eliminate the Technical Intern Training Program, the reality of which has diverged from its supposed intent, or to limit it to its original goal of international cooperation[5].”

Zainichi Koreans and Nikkei Brazilians: Challenges in Contemporary Japan

As mentioned earlier, the Japanese government revised the Immigration Control and Refugee Law and implemented new visa statuses as measures to fill in labour shortages. With this revision, in 1990 and in 2019, there has been a considerable increase in migrant workers; however, this has reinitiated the debate on how to integrate the two largest migrant communities, that is, the Zainichi Koreans and Nikkei Brazilians. This section will attempt to first, examine the background, history and current situation of the Zainichi Koreans and Nikkei Brazilians.

Zainichi Koreans

Zainichi Koreans or ethnic Koreans “moved” to Japan after the annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910. At the time, the ethnic Koreans were subjects of Imperial Japan and were given Japanese nationality. By 1938, some 800,000 Koreans had migrated to Japan, and from 1939-1945, many Koreans were forced to move to Japan to work. Ever since 1939, the Japanese Imperial Government had enforced assimilation policies, such as enforcement of Japanese names (総氏改名 or Soshi-kamei). After the end of the Second World War, many Koreans repatriated, but 500,000 to 600,000 Koreans stayed in Japan. The primary reasons for staying in Japan were socio-economic” and the division of the two “Koreas”. The Korean community was divided along the lines of the division of the motherland, and two communities: the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (在日本朝鮮人連合總會 or Soren, those who affiliate with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea) and the Korean Residents Union in Japan (在日本大韓国民団 or Mindan, those who affiliate with the Republic of Korea) were established in 1946 and 1948, respectively. Zainichi Koreans were given residency status after the war, but formally lost their Japanese nationality in 1952 with the signing of the San Francisco Treaty.

The Zainichi Koreans are divided along the lines in the motherland. Since the normalization of Japan and Korea’s diplomatic relations in 1965, the Zainichi Koreans who affiliate themselves with the ROK hold South Korean passport; however, since Japan and the DPRK do not have diplomatic ties, the Zainichi Koreans who affiliate with the DPRK are “stateless” in Japan.

The Zainichi Koreans have faced implicit and direct discrimination in Japanese society. However, with the increase in the popularity of the Korean wave, discrimination has decreased to some extent. However, many still face the challenge of mainstreaming into Japanese society, especially those who affiliate with the DPRK. One of the major issues facing them is the Korean ethnic schools or chosen gakko. While the Korean ethnic schools can establish their curriculum freely, the school itself is not recognized by Japanese education law. Therefore, the diplomas of students graduating from this school are not recognized; therefore, these students cannot enter Japanese university without taking the secondary school equivalency test to obtain eligibility to sit the university entrance exam. However, many students opt not to take this equivalency test because its double the burden on them. These students then enroll in a Korean ethnic university or chosen daigako, which is also not recognized by the Japanese government. Therefore, it makes it impossible for them to mainstream, because they are not able to obtain jobs at Japanese

companies (because they are deemed not to have a university diploma), and instead take over their family business of Korean barbeque restaurants or pachinko parlours (pinball machines).

Nikkei (People with Japanese Heritage) on Long-Term Residency Visa

The Japanese government revised the Immigration Control and Refugees Law in 1990, and one of the major changes included the implementation of the long-term residency visa for Nikkei or people with Japanese heritage. The majority of people holding this visa include Nikkei Brazilians, who “came back” to Japan to seek employment during Japan’s bubble economy. At the time, Japan desperately needed to fill in the labour gap especially in non-skilled or 3D (dirty, difficult and dangerous) work, even though the long-term residency visa allows them to work in any industry.

Many Nikkei Brazilians have worked in logistics, manufacturing plants and factories of electronics and electric equipment, and live in public housings with their family. In the past, there was a clash between the local Japanese residents and Nikkei Brazilians as they started to share living spaces in public housing, often time due to the difference in culture and living habits. Many local governments were forced to face the challenges of implementing measures to ease the tension between the two communities, as well as provide public services, Japanese language education and other services. In the past, Nikkei Brazilians were considered to be “temporary visitors” (dekasegi in Japanese); therefore, even though the Japanese central government created a new visa category specific for those with Japanese heritage, they failed to provide other services necessary for them to settle in Japan. However, in recent years, many Nikkei Brazilians are settling permanently in Japan; thus, the local governments are under pressure to implement their own policies to tackle the issues at hand.

Policies Concerning the Acceptance of Migrants

This section will examine the various policies concerning the acceptance of migrants initiated by local governments.

Guideline of Acceptance of Migrants Through the Collaboration of Local Governments (2001~)

In the 1990s, with the increase of Nikkei Brazilians in various cities in Japan, local governments decided to collaborate and create joint guidelines on accepting migrants to their community. Thus, in 2001, local municipalities established the “Council for Cities of Non-Japanese Residents (Gaikokujin Shuju Toshi Kaigi)” in order to “create a diverse community composed of people with various background.” It began as a council for exchanging and sharing policy ideas, and even making policy recommendations to the national government.

Promotion of Multicultural Coexistence Plan and Measures by Local Governments (2006)

When the number of foreign residents in Japan hit 2 million in 2005, the Ministry of Internal Affairs notified all local governments to devise guidelines for the acceptance of foreign residents in each respective local municipality. More precisely, the ministry requested that local municipalities design a plan for the “promotion of multicultural coexistence,” following the guidelines proposed by the ministry. This included the following three items: 1) supporting the communication between the local Japanese residents and foreign residents; 2) supporting the lives of foreign residents; 3) community building for diverse and multicultural coexistence. The ministry also requested that each local government implement policies to accept foreign

residents and collaborate with external organizations, such as non-profit organizations and international exchange associations.

As of 2019, only 6% of all local municipalities have implemented an independent plan for the promotion of multicultural coexistence. Many municipalities have included aspects of the plan into their general plan or as part of their internationalization plan. Some small sized municipalities do not even have any plans to establish or implement such policies.

Effect of Depopulation and Regional Revitalization (2010~)

In 2010, the effect of population decline due to Japan's aging society and low birth rate started to influence the guidelines on accepting migrants into Japan. In 2014, the Japan Policy Council announced that in the near future, some regional cities would "completely disappear" with the rapid depopulation. Following this announcement, Prime Minister Abe publicly announced the "General Strategy for Revitalizing Cities, People and Jobs" and requested that local municipalities establish new targets to increase its population and to create new opportunities to attract more people.

The Outcome of Such Policies and Case Studies

This section will examine two case studies of local municipalities that have implemented innovative policies to accept foreign migrants. One is Hamamatsu City in Shizuoka prefecture, home to the biggest Nikkei Brazilians community in Japan. The second case is Tsuruhashi in Ikuno-ku, Osaka, which is one of the largest Zainichi Korean communities in Japan.

Hamamatsu City, Shizuoka Prefecture

The total population of Hamamatsu is 810,000, of which 23,000 are foreign residents (2.9% of the total population). It is home to the biggest Nikkei Brazilian community in Japan, where 39% of the total foreign residents are Brazilian, followed by 16% Filipino and 11% Chinese. One of the reason Hamamatsu is a popular destination for migrant workers is because many logistics and electronics companies have their plants and factories in Hamamatsu. The number of migrant workers in 1988 was merely 2,700; however, in 1992 this number increased to 11,000 and peaked in 2008 at 33,000.

Hamamatsu City played an active role in founding the Council for Cities of Non-Japanese Residents and has implemented its original and unique policies for foreigners, which has been included in the "2nd Hamamatsu Multicultural Coexistence City Vision (2018-2022)". In this vision, the main directions include: 1) constructing the community together with residents with diverse background; 2) developing the community by utilizing diversity; 3) accepting people into the community so that everyone can live in a safe and comfortable environment.

The city has outsourced many of its projects to the Hamamatsu Foundation for International Communication and Exchange (HICE). The two main pillars of HICE include the operation and management of the Hamamatsu Intercultural Centre and the operation and management of Hamamatsu Foreign Resident Study Support Centre. The Hamamatsu Intercultural Centre was established in 1992 and is responsible for multilingual consultation, disaster prevention and relief. The Hamamatsu Foreign Resident Study Support Centre was established in 2010, and is responsible for operating a Japanese language course, as well as supporting children with school, mental health, and finding jobs in order to decrease unemployment of foreigners living in Hamamatsu.

Tsuruhashi, Ikuno-ku, Osaka Prefecture

The area of Tsuruhashi in Ikuno-ku, Osaka, is home to one of the largest Korean communities in Japan. This area is known as K-town or Korean Town. The reason for the high percentage of ethnic Koreans in this area dates back to the colonial days, where there was a regular ferry from Busan to Osaka, and many Koreans came to this area to live and work.

Currently there are over 20,000 Zainichi Koreans living in this area. It is home to the largest concentration of Korean barbecue restaurants as well as other ethnic Korean businesses. The Ikuno ward office, as well as various NPOs like the Japan-Korea Cultural Exchange Association or Ikuno Multicultural Flat host outreach programmes to connect the local Japanese and Korean communities, as well as provide language support and multilingual consultation.

In the two case studies above, one can see efforts being made by local government and local entities, but the crucial problem is that the discussion on how to integrate foreign migrants, old and new, is still very premature, and the central government has not taken much initiative to lead the discussion. The reason lies with the belief in Japan that its people are homogenous [6]. The recurring hate crimes, as well as the marginalization of minorities are very much prevalent in Japan. The interesting point here is that marginalization takes place with not only the Zainichi Korean but also the Nikkei Brazilians, who have Japanese heritage. There is still much work to be done in order to integrate foreign migrants into Japanese society.

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***This paper is an updated version from Hyunjoo Naomi Chi, “Japan’s New Wave of Immigration?: Focusing on the Strategies of Local Governments in Japan,” *Annals of Public Policy Studies* (Hokkaido University), 14 (2020), 43–57.**



Ulises Granados and Hyunjoo Naomi Chi at ISA Asia Conference in Singapore, 2018

Sino-Russian Competition/Cooperation in Latin America

Ulises Granados

Introduction

Amid the recent developments in Syria, the continuous Western sanctions against Moscow for the annexation of Crimea, and naval movements by China in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, the international community wonders whether a renewed era of Washington antagonism toward Beijing and Moscow is in the making. While Eurasia has been the main arena for such contention, Latin America, a region with strong links with both Russia and China since before the Second World War, is nonetheless another arena where the U.S. has recently seen those countries' advances in the political and economic fronts. After the end of the Cold War, there was a decade of U.S. global leadership as a hyper power, while both China and Russia detached relatively from Latin America, only to return in the 2000s. During the last fifteen years, the Russian and Chinese presence in Latin America can be understood as a reaction to U.S. relative lack of interest and U.S. inactivity in the hemisphere, in clear contrast with the Cold War era. Both the 9-11 terrorist attacks and more recently the "pivot to Asia" has resulted in a significant U.S. lack of interest in Latin America[1], probably taking for granted the stability of the region.

Both Moscow and Beijing have actively promoted multi-polarity in the global scene, and having selective partnerships in Latin America serve ultimately to that purpose for both. Russia is interested in building geopolitical alliances in the American hemisphere, with selected Latin American partners, to confront U.S. hegemony and combat unilateralism in the international order[2]. Russian ambassador to Mexico, Eduard R. Mayalan, said in 2015 that such interest stem from the fact that the region is one of the centers of the multipolar world and a center of world development[3].

For Russia, the 1990s was a decade of withdrawal from the American hemisphere, as the Cuban population felt during the "special period" during the mid-1990s, but since then the first presidency of Vladimir Putin has somehow reversed such policy. Russia's current intention to upgrade its relations with Latin America is manifest in its Foreign Policy Strategy Concept for 2013, in which Russia declared that its aim is to "...consolidate its ties with Latin American partners at international and regional forums, expand cooperation with multilateral organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean, in particular with the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Southern Common Market[4]."

China, meanwhile, has maintained a long tradition of friendship with the people of Latin America, even though most of its official relationships dated back to the 1970s when Taipei exited the U.N. and Beijing was recognized by most countries as the legitimate China. However, the Republic of China in Taiwan still maintains some leverage in Central America and the Caribbean as some countries recognize the regime, posing a problem for Beijing in its quest of diplomatic recognition, albeit relatively small though. Therefore, the One-China Policy has since the 1970s been the basis for its interactions with Latin American states overall. China's current involvement in the Latin American region is framed through its recent 2016 Policy Paper on Latin America and the Caribbean[5], its second white paper after the first came to the public in 2008. While recognizing that "as important members of emerging economies

and the developing world, Latin American and Caribbean countries play a major role in safeguarding world peace and development,” the current policy for the hemisphere recognizes that “the development of China cannot be possible without the development of other developing countries, including countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.” To achieve this goal, China has backed the establishment of the Forum of China and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (China-CELAC Forum) since 2015, which approved a Cooperation Plan 2015–2019, a 500 billion USD trade fund for the region, and 250 USD billion in Foreign Direct Investment for the next ten years.

The questions probed in the following involve the present and future of Chinese and Russian involvement in Latin America, an involvement that seems to develop along parallel lines as their interests seem not to collide beyond their desire to fill a vacuum left by Washington. What is the nature of their presence in the hemisphere and how it has responded to U.S. hemispheric policy? How complementary or competitive are Beijing and Moscow interactions with countries in the region? The present essay identifies relevant features of China’s involvement in the region, highlighting the economic nature of such presence, contrasting it with Russia’s main objectives and performance in the region. Next, an analysis on the cooperative nature of the Russia-China presence in Latin America and its limits is offered, as well as how and to what extent they compete in the region, mainly at the economic level. Final considerations are offered to identify the limits of their overall presence in Latin America as well as pointing out the propensity of political changes in Latin America that might affect future Chinese and Russian engagement.

Chinese interests in Latin America

Compared with Russia, China’s overall interest in Latin America covers a wide range of areas, from economic, social, and cultural, to political and diplomatic ones. As eleven countries still maintain diplomatic relations with the Republic of China (Taiwan) (namely, Belize, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), the One China Policy has been the driving force in its relations with Latin American and the Caribbean countries, as the recent swift of diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing by Panama in June 2017 highlights. Recent Chinese interest in Latin America is manifest in former Chinese President Xi Jinping’s three visits. The first was held in 2013 by his visits to Mexico, Costa Rica, Trinidad y Tobago, one in July 2014 amid the BRICS Summit in Fortaleza, Brazil, which also included visits to Argentina, Venezuela and Cuba, and in late 2016 when he visited Ecuador and Chile, and participated in the APEC Summit in Lima, Peru.

For Latin America, where the average GDP for 2014 reached only 1.3 per cent, China represents an attractive partner in search of markets for raw materials and other commercial goods, and Beijing sees the region as a continuous partner amid its next-generation economic structural reforms. It is known that bilateral trade between China and Latin America and the Caribbean region amounted to 260 billion USD in 2013[6]. Between 2005 and 2014, China has approved a total of 119 million USD in loans to Latin American countries and has pledge investments totaling 250 billion USD over the next ten years[7]. Moreover, China has started what has been called the “yuan diplomacy” in the region, manifest in the 2012 agreement reached among BRICS countries to foster agreements in local currencies, which in turn led to the 2013 yuan-denominated swap deal between China and Brazil (previously in 2009 China and Argentina reached a similar 11-billion-USD agreement)[8].

At the multilateral level, China is already involved with Latin America in two mechanisms, the Forum for East Asia-Latin American Cooperation (FEALAC) and more recently the Forum of China and Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (China CELAC). While the former is a formal dialogue forum leading to co-projects among both regions, the latter has been a platform between China and the region devised to foster cooperation and promote the development of cooperative partnerships since 2015[9].

Since the end of the Cold War, basic guidelines for China-Latin America relations, and the basis for the China-CELAC cooperation since 2015, are framed in two white papers. The first, dated 2008, set up guidelines for bilateral cooperation in several fields, taking the One China Policy as the base for developing state-to-state relations in the hemisphere. As the 2008 White Paper is more general and rather aspirational in nature, a more complete, updated document was issued eight years later. Since the issuing of the 2016 White Paper, China has been promoting multilateral contacts with Latin America within the frame of the China CELAC mechanism and through bilateral relationships at different levels of partnerships. The white paper currently offers the most comprehensive plan to engage the region through the models “1+3+6” and “3x3”. The model is defined as follows:

“China is ready to work with Latin American and Caribbean countries to build the new “1+3+6” framework for pragmatic cooperation (i.e. guided by the China-Latin American and Caribbean Countries Cooperation Plan (2015–2019), utilizing trade, investment and financial cooperation as driving forces, and identifying energy and resources, infrastructure construction, agriculture, manufacturing, scientific and technological innovation and information technology as cooperation priorities), actively explore the new “3x3” model for capacity cooperation (which refers to jointly building the three major passages of logistics, electricity and information in Latin America, enabling healthy interactions among the enterprise, society and government, and expanding the three financing channels of funds, credit loans and insurance)...”[10].

At the level of regional mechanisms, China has been an observer of the Inter American Bank (IAB) since 2009, the Latin American Association of Integration (ALADI) since 1994, and the Organization of American States (OEA) since 2004, as well as a permanent dialogue partner in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). China is also one of the 52 observers of the Pacific Alliance (PA), one of the most promising models of cooperation in Latin America nowadays. In the multilateral agenda, China has deepened cooperation with Latin America in several areas such as the UN Climate Summit since 2014, as well as a modest coordination in the reform of the UN organisms with selected countries[11].

Within China’s own economic strategy, individual partners have been prioritized. On an individual basis, China’s engagement with selected countries is more visible in Mexico, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Peru, Cuba, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, where Chinese companies have set up activities in a wide range of sectors, including mining, oil industry, agriculture, construction, manufacture, services, telecommunications, logistic services and the bank sector. In each sector, Chinese companies, ranging from State Owned Enterprises (SOE) to private firms and private investors, work in close contacts with local companies (such as in the oil sector in several South American countries) taking advantage of the local sales infrastructure[12]. In general, it is known that Chinese companies focus their activities in big Latin American economies, profitable markets such as Brazil, or strategic markets such as Mexico, where the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) remains in force and reforms in the energy sector continues. Taking a holistic approach in their economic activities, Chinese companies,

backed by their government, fund most of their activities through financial services, some of them offered by Chinese banks such as the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China and the China Construction Bank.

Since 2008 (with the end of a Taiwan-China diplomatic truce for diplomatic recognition), Beijing has started to detonate many projects in the region and with countries that do not even maintain diplomatic relations. Attention has been paid to partnerships with ALBA nations and Caribbean states, huge infrastructure projects (such as a hydroelectric dam in Ecuador, port and a train line in Venezuela, or roads and bridges in Guyana, Jamaica and Surinam) [13]. More ambitious projects include the tourist resort Baha Mar and Blackwood Point in Bahamas, Bacholet Bay in Granada, and Cabo Dorado in Mexico. Above all, is the 50 billion USD Nicaragua Inter-Oceanic Canal funded by the Chinese and is scheduled to start operating in 2020, even though the recent Panama diplomatic shift in favor of Beijing has highlighted the possible redundancy of such a project in Nicaragua once China has better leverage over the improved canal.

With Latin America as a region, China has shown a more systematic approach as a partner in its efforts to detonate economic growth in the Asia Pacific region. During the November 2016 APEC Lima Summit, President Xi Jinping invited Latin American countries to join China's initiative for a long-projected Asia Pacific Free Trade Area, an APEC long-awaited aspiration since its inception during the early-1990. Here, China has started to fill the shoes of the U.S. in the trade negotiations arena. Beijing currently maintains Free Trade Agreements (FTA) with Chile, Costa Rica and Peru, and is interested in signing with more Latin American states, including Mexico, Colombia and Mercosur. Now that U.S. President Trump has withdrawn from the Trans-Pacific Partnership and shows less interests in free trade under the WTO rules, China's economic advances in Latin America, including more trade and investment in the region, as well as forging more FTAs with regional partners, remain a strong force vis-à-vis a general lack of U.S. interest in the hemisphere.

Russian Interests in Latin America

The Cold War, mainly the political developments in Central America, shaped Russia's political strategy for Latin America following the Second World War. Once it ended in 1989, the region briefly ceased being a political priority for Moscow, but ten years later the Russian presence started to become increasingly manifest. Current Russian interest in the hemisphere under the presidency of Vladimir Putin started in the 2000s. Russia has been an observer of the Organization of American States (OAS) and has expressed interest in working with the Rio Group, the Southern Common Market (Mercosur), the Central American Integration System (SICA), and the Andean Community. It is known that while in 2001 total trade amounted 3 billion, by 2013 that amount skyrocketed to 24 billion USD.

While it is believed that after 2008-9 the Russian presence in Latin America started to grow (both as a new period of global economic rebound since the financial crisis and also as a result of searching for new markets after the Russian-Georgian conflict) (Ellis, 2015, p. v), a more focused interest in Latin America started with the July 2014 visit of President Vladimir Putin, only four months after the annexation of Crimea. Russia is particularly interested in deals with Latin American governments to provide agricultural products to compensate for U.S. and European Union sanctions against Moscow. Among those deals, Mercosur proposed to increase food exports to Russia in 2016. And yet, the extent of Russian interactions with the region

in general is far more modest than the expanding activities of China, and have been focused mainly in arms sales, the energy sector and mining[14].

In the political arena, an important objective for Moscow's approach to the region is breaking the diplomatic isolation resulting from the Ukraine conflict and the annexation of Crimea and to compensate for sanctions through an active diplomacy in the region with its partners. Such partners are those who have been critical to the U.S. and its policies perceived as hegemonic in the hemisphere, and to that extent Russian diplomacy has worked relatively well. Some Latin American countries abstained from condemning the Crimean referendum in 2014, including the Bolivarian Alliance (ALBA) group that supported Russia's actions, and some members of Mercosur abstained in a UN vote over the fate of Crimea[15]. Interesting to note is that most of Moscow's key partners in the region have received similar criticisms over how they managed their own political and social issues. Critics of Russia's presence in the region quickly point out that Moscow's key allies in Latin America profited from the absence of mutually uncomfortable political questions, namely human rights violations in Cuba, prosecution of political activists in Venezuela, abuse of power in Nicaragua, or "the way politics are conducted in Russia[16]."

With individual Latin America countries, Russia has strengthened bilateral economic ties, most prominently with Cuba, Colombia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Bolivia and Peru. Important areas include agriculture, arms trade and military cooperation, both in Central America and South America. Nicaragua, for instance, has benefitted from a growing bilateral trade (totaling USD 110 million in 2012), an economic partnership based mainly on agricultural products, and political cooperation in their fight against illegal drug trafficking coming through Central America to Russia. Moscow's main interests in Nicaragua include a proposal for the Trans-Oceanic Canal (providing security officers for its construction), as well as the sale of frigates to Managua and patrolling Nicaraguan Caribbean and Pacific littorals[17]. Among other Russian interests are securing naval stations in the hemisphere in general and upgrading air traffic infrastructure in Nicaragua in particular. In early-2017, a bilateral agreement was signed to procure the Glonass system (the Russian version of the GPS system) to Managua and to fund the expansion of the national airport[18].

In the southern hemisphere, Moscow's engagement has been particularly active with governments rather critical of the U.S.. Russian economic interests cover the SOE Rosneft deals with Argentina and Brazil, while Rostec (another SOE for high-tech industrial products) covers the sales of aircraft, helicopters, and anti-aircraft defense systems to several governments[19]. With Argentina in particular another important objective is improving its civilian nuclear capability. However, the bulk of Russian cooperation with South American countries has been in the primary sector. A representative case is Brazil, where Moscow hammered out in 2017 a fishery deal for Russian firms based in there as well as Russian exports of wheat to the country.

A similar pattern has been identified with Venezuela, where economic engagement also covers the oil and arms trade industries. Venezuela has been in fact the largest export market for Russian weapons after India, even though it is possible that the Venezuelan market will shrink considerably amid Caracas' severe economic situation; Russia is also a large partner in the Venezuelan oil industry, including alliances in petroleum and gas production between national companies and Rosneft. To finance their activities, Venezuelan banks, since 2013, have owned 49 percent of both Russian Evrofinance Mosnarbank S.A. and VTB Group and Gazprombank.

Cuba, a historic Russian partner sharing similar perceptions of the U.S. in the

hemisphere, places prominently in Moscow's diplomatic and economic agendas. After 2000, bilateral relations have greatly improved, including guarantees for Cuban airline system modernization to make Havana a tourist hub for Russian nationals visiting the Caribbean region. Bilateral agreements were further inked in 2008 during the Dimitri Medveyev presidency in the fields of health, education, space exploration and military cooperation. Later, a 2010–2013 oil exploration project was jointly conducted between JSC Zarubezhneft and CUPET, the Cuban SOE oil company. Partly as a measure to counter the U.S. embargo to the island, it is known that during Putin's 2014 trip to the region, Russia forgave 90 percent of Havana's 35.2 billion outstanding debt, renegotiating the remaining 10 percent for economic investment[20]. More recently, in March 2016 an oil agreement secured Russian energy supply to the island after a ten-year halt[21]; diplomatically, it is widely known that Moscow has denounced Trump's recent decision to roll back from U.S.-Cuba agreements inked during the last year of the Obama administration.

As for the political interest of Moscow in the hemisphere, it is necessary to put Russian advances in a global perspective. Until the election of U.S. President Trump, observers noted that Russian interests lie basically in Eurasia, not in the Americas. Former Organization of American States (OAS), Jose Insulza, recognized in 2015 that Russia's intention to influence Latin America was practically impossible as most problems in the world would occur in the Eurasian region[22]. However, as information emerges on the suspected Russian involvement in the U.S. election, Moscow has renewed its commitment with traditional allies in the region, such as Cuba. Yet, so far Russia's economic stakes in the region, its military cooperation with selected countries, and the Russian diaspora, remain relatively low as compared with those in Eurasia.

Signals of Sino-Russian Cooperation in the Region

Both Russia and China, as mentioned above, propose a more multipolar international society that reflects a more diversified world view, and refuse to accept a U.S. liberal world order in areas of universal human rights, democracy, a U.S.-led financial international system and institutions, and the war on terror and humanitarian intervention, to name a few areas. Here convergence of interests between Beijing and Moscow is manifest in several areas of the international agenda. However, Sino-Russian cooperation in the world stage is clearly more manifest in the security realm in Eurasia, and in geographical areas of paramount importance for both countries. For instance, in September 2016 both navies held joint naval maneuvers in the South China Sea and days later China joined Russia in a veto on new Western resolutions on Syria. Both moves can be defined as part of a "strategic convergence", even though they are far from being considered a manifestation of an alliance between Moscow and Beijing[23]. From the geographical perspective, cooperation in Latin America seems of a secondary importance as compared with Europe, the Middle East of the Asian maritime realm. Latin America is a relative peaceful region where borders have been basically demarcated and respected and where Beijing and Moscow's geo-strategic stakes are virtually non-existent, at least now.

For Moscow, Russia rapprochement with China has been driven by Western sanctions, in particular since 2008 amid the conflict with Georgia and more recently after the annexation of Crimea in 2014[24]. And yet, cooperative relations between them are still deeply rooted in their own policy strategies. For Russia, cooperation with China on an equal basis is enshrined in its February 2013 Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation: 80. Russia will

further build up a comprehensive, equal and trustful partnership and strategic collaboration with China and actively develop cooperation in all the spheres. Russia regards the fact that the two countries share the same fundamental positions on key global issues as one of the core elements of regional and global stability.

In Latin America, Russia intends with China to forge solid partnerships with emerging powers, mainly Brazil, amid the BRICS initiative, to foster South-South cooperation. The visits of both Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin to the region came during the July 2014 Fortaleza BRICS Summit hosted by Brazil. During the event, Brazil, China, Russia, South Africa and India inaugurated the 100 billion New Development Bank (NDB) for economic stabilization, and advanced plans to establish the Contingent Reserve Agreement in 2015. Recently in April 2016 the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF) established a strategic alliance with the CEO of the NDB, K. V. Kamath, to explore new avenues of cooperation in the region[25].

With Latin American countries on an individual basis, it is highly improbable to see Russian-Chinese cooperation beyond statements of South-South cooperation in international fora: economically, each nation pursues its own objectives in Latin America; politically, China has kept a more moderated attitude towards the political processes in the region, abstaining in general to pronounce preference for regimes as that would undermine trade and investment opportunities. One exception is possible: Venezuela. A plausible pattern of cooperation between Moscow and Beijing may be limited to trying to save Venezuela, which currently has fallen behind on shipments of crude and oil under the oil-for-loans deals with both countries. As Chinese and Russian oil companies might try to recover debt from the oil giant PDVSA through projects or assets outside the oil sector[26], it is most probable that a coordinated political decision from both Moscow and Beijing might be reached.

Overall, it is improbable to see in the near future a cooperative Sino-Russian mechanism in Latin America such as the Central Asian Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), as both countries understand that, first, the level of terror activities in the hemisphere is minimal compared with Eurasia; second, U.S. political influence in the hemisphere can't still be easily confronted as it has been protected in a region involving former Soviet republics and the border with China; and third, there are no direct national security imperatives to deal with in Latin America for both countries so far.

Sino-Russian Competition in the Hemisphere

The level of Russian economic engagement in Latin America is still minor in comparison with that of China, and for Moscow the region is less crucial for its economic development as it is for China. Politically, Russian interest in cultivating strong links with an “anti-U.S. axis” in Latin America is not shared by China, which is more dedicated to promoting the 1954 five principles of peaceful coexistence in its official discourse for the region.

And yet, there are some areas where both countries interests meet, mainly economic but also military, that in turn reveals some degree of competition amid its overall interest to provide Latin American countries with alternative partners to a hesitant U.S. more interested in other regions of the world. Such competition between Moscow and Beijing for partners is quite peculiar because their own objectives in the region tend not to be identical. Particularly after the 2014 annexation of Crimea and since more U.S. sanctions have been imposed to Moscow, and after the 2016 U.S. election in which Russian interference has been documented, Russia is looking to maintain partners in the hemisphere eager to make economic deals. Therefore, good

relations with countries such as Venezuela, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Bolivia are paramount for Russia; also, Moscow's interests in anti-American candidates for future presidential elections (such as Mexico in 2018) are likely to emerge soon.

China, on the other side, pursues clearer economic objectives in the region rather than trying to shape the political landscape in Latin America to counter U.S. influence. Trade and investment are the priorities in the hemisphere; therefore, possible conflict of interest, however low, are likely to develop between China and Russia. Here, compared with their bilateral cooperation in Latin America amid the BRICS framework, Sino-Russian competition is more likely to develop in the race for economic partners.

The nature of the competition is shaped by both the size of their economies and their level of development, as well as by the international economic conditions. For instance, during the last decade, Russian traditional exports to Latin America, including agricultural machinery and fertilizers, has been facing strong Chinese competition that offers lower prices[27]. On the other side, however, Russia has been since 2014 trying to attract more Latin American firms eager to do business in those agricultural products whose demand has been in decline in China since the contraction of its economy. In fact, it is believed that Chinese current decline in imports of fossil fuels and raw materials still presents an opportunity for Russia.

Some Latin American countries are already in the arena for such economic competition between Chinese and Russian companies. For instance, in Argentina, the SOE Rosatom has been competing with both Chinese and U.S. firms in the tender for nuclear plants; it is known that Rosatom lost the tender to provide steam turbines for the Embalse nuclear power station, one of the three operational nuclear power plants in the country, and lost another bid to the China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC) for the construction of the Atucha III Plant, a project in which CNNC financed a 2 billion USD long-term financing agreement[28]. Other relevant projects that involved China and Russia's interest include the Vaca Muerta shale gas reservoir in the Neuquen Basin.

Another relevant area of competition between China and Russia is the arms market. During the years of Venezuela's Hugo Chavez regime, Caracas became the leading purchaser in the hemisphere of offensive Russian weapons, including Su-30 jet fighters, multiple rocket launcher systems, artillery systems and air defense systems. China also concentrates the bulk of its arms deals with Latin America in Venezuela, followed by ALBA (between 2011 and 2015, China sold 373 million in weaponry to Caracas)[29]. Other South American countries, such as Argentina and Brazil, are also regular customers of both China and Russia weaponry.

However, in general the Latin American arms market is not big (from 2011 to 2015, it represented only six percent of the global market); moreover, political decisions might change with new governments coming to power with implications for their weapons procurement programs (as in the case of Argentina under President Mauricio Macri); also, it seems that the Venezuelan arms market is weakening, and with that the interests of Russian and Chinese arms suppliers. Currently, as the Venezuelan economy deteriorates, Russia is finding a more diversified arms market, including partners for defensive hardware such as helicopters for Mexico, Bolivia, Chile, and Paraguay, besides Argentina and Brazil as regular customers[30].

The remaining cases of perceived Sino-Russian competition in the hemisphere is Cuba, a country that has enjoyed preferential treatment from both Beijing and Moscow for their own motives (the former looking to provide Central America and the Caribbean with the most reliable interlocutor and promoter of the One China Policy; the latter wishing to regain

its former Soviet status and influence in the sub-region against the U.S.). With the reversal of Cuba's Obama policy under President Trump, Havana is likely to get closer to Moscow and Beijing, even though that doesn't necessarily mean cooperation. Havana is most happy to both receive in June 2017 its biggest Russian oil shipment of the century and the pledged of two billion FDI for its railroad, while receiving from China computers[31]. However, even as U.S. policy hardens against Havana, it seems less a Sino-Russian competition there in the making than both countries' attempts to consolidate their respective areas of trade and cooperation with the island.

Conclusions

As the above outlines, while Russian interest in Latin America has largely increased since 2014, which in turn brings serious doubts over long-term commitment to the region, China's presence has shown a more consistent, long-term strategy policy for the years to come, as evident in its 2016 White Paper. Yes, both countries are in the region, but their objectives are not identical, their commitments have a different history, and their own projection of hard and soft power is unique.

Russian trade and other economic deals in the hemisphere reflects the urgency of Moscow to make friends and allies amid Western sanctions. With the reported Russian involvement in the U.S. 2016 presidential election, a cloud of tension might be forming in the forthcoming presidential elections in Latin America (in Chile and Honduras in 2017, Costa Rica, Paraguay, Colombia, Mexico, Brazil and Venezuela in 2018) and other low-level elections, whereby Moscow might try to consolidate its presence through legal or illegal means. As countries that maintain strong trade and cooperation agreements with Russia have denounced Western sanctions against Moscow, an important political aspect of Russia's advance in the hemisphere has become clearly manifest.

China, while profiting from the current U.S. administration isolationism to advance a close partnership with the region in general, has shown, nonetheless, that the economic and commercial aspect of its presence in Latin America, amid its One China Policy, is of paramount importance. China's engagement with Latin America, as framed in the 2016 White Paper, must nonetheless be further materialized through concrete measures to push forward new projects, including a new working-level timetable for the China-Latin American cooperation in the future[32] (Granados, 2016).

It has also become manifest that room for Sino-Russian cooperation is extremely limited and most of the cooperation is framed in the BRICS model, which in turn should be streamlined in the years to come as only China and India represents the current engines of the group. Whether China and Russia can jointly offer Venezuela an exit to its financial problems or to Cuba an alternative to engage the international community once the Trump administration has backpaddled recent U.S. overtures toward the island remain to be seen. Probably a pattern of commercial competition between Beijing and Moscow will continue in big infrastructure projects and arms sales in the region, with China most likely having the upper hand in bidding due to its huge capacity, capital and manpower. In sum, it is possible to rather characterize the Sino-Russian presence in Latin America as coexistence rather than cooperation/competition.

As a concluding note, it should be noted that politics in the whole hemisphere are in constant flux, and both China and Russia will have to confront changing realities. The opportunities posed by both China and Russia in the American hemisphere at the expenses

of the U.S. shouldn't be taken for granted. With more centrist governments emerging in Latin America, the years of leftist militancy against Washington are slowly fading in Argentina, Brazil and Chile. Such changes have a direct impact in deals with both Beijing and Moscow. The same can be said for the future of member countries of ALBA or even the prospects of survival of President Maduro's regime in Venezuela. To what extent it will have influence in economic and military deals with both Beijing and Moscow is a pending question.

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***This article is a revised version of a paper prepared for the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center 2017 Summer International Symposium.**



Ulises Granados at the SRC Summer Symposium, 2017

Presentation of “Sino-Russian Competition/Cooperation in Latin America”

Ulises Granados

My research is about Sino-Russian competition and cooperation in Latin America. A big question is whether a new era of Washington antagonism versus China and Russia is in the making. Another significant question is what Russia and Chinese interests are in Latin America? Why are their interests more visible than before? The Russian and Chinese presence in Latin America can be understood as a kind of reaction to America’s lack of interest in the region. This is a common view among some specialists who argue that the U.S., since 9/11 and President Obama’s pivot to Asia, has been preoccupied with other parts of the world. Or perhaps the U.S. took for granted a region that some Americans think of as a ‘backyard’ of the U.S.

Consequently, the Chinese and the Russians have been going slowly but steadily into Latin America. This has been the case since the 1990s. Russia’s foreign policy strategy has given special attention to Latin America. This is especially true for South America more than Mexico and Central America. China, too, since the 1990s, has been interested in Latin America. However, its interest is different from Russia.

The Chinese presence and interest in Latin America go back many years. China has had a long tradition of friendship with the region since the 1970s. The basic policy of Chinese engagement in Latin America is based on the One China policy. This is the frame which has been shaping the relationship between Beijing and most Latin American countries. Recently, in 2008 and in 2016, there were Chinese policy papers on Latin America. China’s foreign policy on Latin America is becoming more complex. The Chinese government has put much effort in using Latin America for their economic development. So, what is the nature of the Chinese and Russian presence in the hemisphere? How do they respond to U.S. hemispheric policy? How complementary or competitive are Beijing and Moscow’s interactions with countries in the region?

My presentation is as follows. I identify some features of Chinese involvement in the region. This is followed by an analysis of the cooperative nature of Russia’s and China’s presence in Latin America, and a discussion as to what extent they might compete and cooperate. Finally, I will consider what the limits might be of the overall Chinese and Russian presence in Latin America.

Volatile political processes in Latin America are important to remember because they might affect future Chinese and Russian engagement in the region. First, I want to say that the Chinese interest in Latin America is framed by the One China policy. To date, eleven countries in Central America and the Caribbean still have diplomatic relations with Taipei, so the basic policy of Chinese engagement in the region is trying to strengthen this One China policy, and if it’s possible, to change diplomatic recognition. The most recent example of a country changing its diplomatic recognition of Taipei is Panama.

President Xi Jinping travelled to the region in 2013, 2014, and 2016. On the last occasion, he went to the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting in Lima, Peru. For China, Latin America is very important because it is a huge market. Especially Central and South America are important for raw materials. Trade has been growing in the last few years. China has been engaging in active UN diplomacy with some selected countries in South

America. China is also active at the multilateral level with the Forum of China and Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. This forum has to be updated next year. We will have a meeting with the Chinese representatives, I think, in October. There will be a meeting for specialists in order to give new ideas and proposals for how to foster this bilateral relationship. It's very important that the relationship is based on two white papers. The 2008 white paper was aspirational in nature so it was updated in September 2016. There are also new concepts that I observed after the One Belt One Road (OBOR) meeting in Beijing. Is it possible for Latin America to be inserted in this OBOR grand strategy? I don't know how exactly, but we will find out.

China belongs as an observer to some multilateral mechanisms in Latin America like the Pacific Alliance. China has been very active with Mexico, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Peru, Colombia, and with Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. Chinese companies are very interested in forging trade relationships in the region, but the huge problem is that they don't invest a lot. Foreign Direct Investment is still very low in Latin America. During last year's APEC meeting in Lima, President Xi Jinping offered his own vision of an Asia-Pacific Free Trade Area (FTA) that was initially proposed in 2014. He is very interested in forging these FTAs as a super FTA in the Asia-Pacific region. FTAs already exist with Chile, Columbia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Peru and Mercosur. In comparison, Russian interest in Latin America started in the early 2000s. Russia is currently an observer of the Organization of American States (OAS), Mercosur and the Central American Integration System. Trade has been growing between Russia and Latin America, but on a lower level as compared with China. Why is Russia in Latin America? I think that since the Georgia conflict in 2008 and after events in Crimea in 2014 the Russians are looking for partners in the Western Hemisphere. Some countries have supported Russia by abstaining to vote against it in the UN. Bilaterally, Russia has forged particularly good relationships with Cuba, Colombia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, and to a certain extent, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador and Peru. With Nicaragua, it is very interesting to know that, like the Chinese, the Russians too are interested in the trans-oceanic channel.

Russia is very interested in Argentina and Brazil. Some State-Owned Enterprises are doing deals in oil and gas, and in the arms industry. Venezuela is also a good partner in trade dealings in the oil industry. Finally, bilateral relations with Cuba have been growing since 2000. Russia has written off 90% of the outstanding debt of Havana. It is important to point out that the Trump factor is important. It's necessary to put Russian advances in Latin America in a global perspective. Until the election of U.S. President Donald Trump, I think observers noted that Russian interests were mainly in Eurasia, not in the Americas. Actually, Jose Insulza, the former Secretary General of the OAS, recognized two years ago that Russia's intention to influence Latin America is practically impossible. I don't think it's impossible, but it seems limited.

So, there is cooperation between China and Russia in the region. I think at the global level, there are some conventions of interest, but conversion of interest is mostly in Eurasia, not in Latin America. I think Latin America might be of secondary importance for Russia and China from the geographical perspective, as compared with Europe, the Middle East, or the Asian realm.

At the institutional level, cooperation is framed within BRICS. Despite BRICS, at the bilateral level, Russia-China cooperation beyond mere statements of cooperation appears difficult. There might be one exception — Venezuela. Venezuela is having trouble paying its debt. It has also fallen behind on shipments of crude oil. It is possible that a coordinated

political decision between Moscow and Beijing might be reached in the near future, but it's not certain. It is improbable to see a mechanism for Sino-Russian cooperation in Latin America, such as an SCO-type organization. This is because both countries understand that the level of terror activities in the hemisphere is almost non-existent. Furthermore, they recognize that U.S. political influence in the hemisphere remains strong and cannot be easily confronted. As a result, there are limits to cooperation.

What about Sino-Russian competition in the hemisphere? There is a certain degree of competition. Russia is looking to maintain partners — especially Venezuela, Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Bolivia. As for Moscow in the political realm, I think there is a kind of shadow over the political process in the region. Moscow's interest in anti-American candidates for future presidential elections in the region, including Mexico in 2017, might be likely to emerge soon. But in the economic realm, there might be some kind of competition because of China. I think Sino-Russian competition is more likely to develop in the race for economic partners. In Argentina, we have seen recently that Russia has lost some bids to China and America for steam turbine contracts for nuclear power plants. Another area is arms transfer to Venezuela and to other countries. Arms sales market in Latin America are very small, if you think globally. However, there is some kind of competition between China and Russia.

The Cuba case is particularly interesting. I think that Cuba is very keen to have both Beijing's assistance (such as a new batch of computers) but is also hoping to have deals with Russia in other areas (like oil shipments). But I don't think this is a conflict. I think the presence, in general, of Russia and China in Latin America goes in parallel. The two powers are not clashing, but neither are they cooperating. It's like a bad neighbor that you live with, but you don't speak to him, so we live our own lives.

My basic conclusions are that Russian interests in the region have intensified recently, especially since 2014. The Chinese presence is more consistent and more complete. China and Russia's objectives in the region are not identical. They have a different story in the region, and their own projection of hard and soft power is unique. In politics, I think Russia is thought of as a greater threat, because of the potential for triggering U.S. intervention. There may be more links with left-wing candidates in future presidential elections, like in Mexico. China is more worried about economic and commercial aspects in Latin America. The economy is of paramount importance for Beijing.

So, what is in the future? I think Sino-Russian cooperation is extremely limited beyond the BRICS model. Venezuela and Cuba are two special cases where cooperation is possible. I think it's possible to see a pattern of commercial competition between Beijing and Moscow in big infrastructure projects and arms sales in the region, and it's important to know that China will likely have the upper hand here, because it's economically more powerful.

In sum, it's possible to characterize the Sino-Russian presence in Latin America as co-existence, rather than cooperation and competition. On a final note, politics in Latin America is changing quickly. Until two years ago, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile had left-wing, anti-American politicians and heads of states. Now things are changing, so that might influence the short, medium, and long-term Russian and Chinese presence in the area.

Comment by Jarosław Jańczak

The paper presents a very interesting and holistic approach to Russian-Chinese relations. Through the perspective of “third states,” it creates a much wider perspective for understanding the nature and dynamism of these relations. The paper deals, in fact, with the global level of how competition and cooperation between two big actors have been built.

The paper reveals at least four factors when debating the relations. First, what is stressed by the author is the long-lasting presence, influence and/or competition of Russia and China in Latin America. At the same time, however, their model differs. China seems to have built its position there gradually, consistently and employing a step-by-step strategy, as opposed to Russia, which after the post-Cold War withdrawal entered the regions concerned with a new impetus, especially following the Georgian and Ukrainian wars. The isolation of Russia by the West pushed it towards the East, as well as other global regions. The question arises, however, of how lasting this shift is. The neo-functional approach—especially in the context of the West still dominating in Russian import-export—would suggest that, sooner or later, the relations will have to be normalized. Would that mean diminishing Russian interest in the non-western dimensions of foreign policy? If so, will China be left as the dominant actor in the debated regions?

Second, the texts are dominated by a (neo-)realist approach, with states, interests and geopolitical games involving Russia and China, and seem to be rooted in the Huntingtonian concept of clashing civilizations. One should remember, however, that apart from the dominating element of conflict in his considerations, the model also stresses integration within civilizations, which is often underestimated. It should be noted that other academic approaches could additionally enrich the understanding of the processes investigated, for example – social constructivism, with its concentration on norms, ideas and identities, and a strong explanatory value in international relations. The question is how strong Russia and China are as “normative powers.” What norms, values and ideas that they promote are attractive for Latin American states?

Third, the issue visible in all the texts is the world order, with both Russia and China promoting a multipolar model. This global approach means that the two powers are aiming at local and regional leadership. Leadership in international relations means that a state is willing and capable of encouraging other actors to contribute to achieving collective goals followed by the recognition of this leadership by other actors. Russia seems to have strong ambitions for leadership, but its capabilities, especially economic, are limited, in contrast to China, which appears to have more resources but is moderate with its aspirations. The question arises of whether a joint leadership of a new world order, mutually supplementing respective shortages, is possible, especially in the debated regions?

The paper by Ulises Granados, investigating how Russia and China interact in Latin America, presents several interesting ideas. What is striking here is the policy of both states to promote multi-polarity, a policy implemented in the “inner court” of the U.S. The key question is, however, not how the only global superpower reacts, but why Russia and China are attractive to the states of the region. By offering investments (China) and subsidies (Russia) both can try to counterbalance the U.S., additionally proposing assistance without a “normative conditionality.” It might have been interesting to include one more actor here – the European Union and its involvement in the region, especially with regard to human rights and environmental protection principles.

Another question refers to the durability of this strategic convergence of Russia and China in Latin America. The economic interests of both countries dominate there but, sooner or later, the necessity of their protection may appear. This would mean the necessity of their political (or even military) presence, which again may lead to a situation where coexistence is replaced with competition or even conflict.

Russian-Chinese relations, marked with asymmetries and difficulties, but also with pragmatism and cooperation, have been changing together with domestic changes in Russia and China. Yet this partnership, visible both in border relations (elimination of long-lasting border disputes) and Eurasian cooperation (as visible in the declaration of the complementary character of the One Belt One Road and Eurasian Economic Union projects) is sometimes interpreted as a signal of Russian pragmatism. If Moscow is unable to counterbalance Beijing, it may decide to join it as part of a bandwagoning strategy. The relative strength of states never remains constant. It is an open question if the same strategy will, sooner or later, be employed in the areas where both states compete for Latin America.

***This part is retrieved from From the Session on “Near, Far, Wherever You Are: Views on Sino-Russian Relations,” the SRC International Summer Symposium “Northeast Asia’s Faultline: One Hundred Years of Sino/Russian/Soviet Competitive Cooperation” held on 14 July 2017. It was originally published in *Northeast Asia Today* 5 (2018). <https://hokudaislav-northeast.net/wp-slav/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/2ac555845c757b2be1d5abf4085fe1c7.pdf>**



A Scene for Discussion



After the Symposium



Field Trip to Otaru

Mexico as a Buffer Zone between Central America and the U.S.: The Chiapas Border

Ulises Granados

During early-December 2017, Professor Iwashita Akihiro, Hokkaido University, and I embarked in a brief, though successful visit to Mexico's Chiapas state, in order to experience first-hand some dynamics playing out in the borderland between Mexico and Guatemala. Eager to learn in the field from a long-established scholar on border studies, I was most grateful to receive Professor Iwashita in Mexico, knowing that I could add to my overall knowledge of borders, in my case focused on Asia, by sharing this experience with him.

I was determined, through preparations and appointments with the right people in Mexico City and in the field, to have this Mexico-Japan team develop a substantial contribution to future studies. While a lot has been studied on the dynamics along the U.S.-Mexico border -mainly because it is probably the most important border between the industrialized North and the global South, I still have the impression that much sociological and ethnographical work should be done regarding Mexico's southern border. Unlike Canada, Mexico is a buffer zone between the U.S. and Central America, point of origin of thousands of illegal migrants not only coming from these countries but from all over the world that during decades have been moving northbound for a better life for themselves and their families.

But now in fact since the Obama administration this influx is not only stopping but also inverting due to stringent immigration policies and stricter enforcement. In 2017 alone, Mexico, as a buffer zone between the U.S. and Central America, received around 500,000 illegal immigrants, 200,000 thousand of them placed at some moment at official immigration detention centers. While 90 per cent of those detained were Central American nationals, it is also known that 91 different nationalities were received in detention centers in Mexico that year. While the U.S. is doing so far a pretty efficient job in protecting its borders and deporting illegals, the question for Mexico is how to cope with such an influx of people without suffering an eventual migratory crisis. That question, in turn, lead academicians, government officials, and NGOs to look south to the other Mexican border. How is a regular day in Mexico's southern border? How illegal migration struggles when transiting in both directions? What can the Mexico-Guatemala border teach us in terms of the endurance of the human being in adversity, in terms of those perils faced as a by-product of globalization (like intense drug and arms smuggling), and in terms of the increasing difficulty for states to protect their territory? With these questions and others in mind we envisioned this short field trip to Chiapas.

In the early morning we arrived by plane from Mexico City to Tapachula, the nearest mid-size city from the Guatemala-Mexico border post at Ciudad Hidalgo, 24 miles by car (and only 20 miles by foot. Yes, this information is relevant there). First at Tapachula we paid a courtesy visit to one of the head officers of the National Immigration Institute's regional office, whose previous contact was kindly arranged by an experienced colleague well versed in border studies and himself an immigration high official in the past. After some one-hour waiting time they received us. This was partially, I am sure, due to our abrupt arrival on such a short notice leaving virtually no time for them to rearrange their own agendas, and also following, I guessed, the widely accepted protocol of waiting once you receive a positive response from the

bureaucracy.

Then we met a most gracious, young female official, area director and her staff, to whom we had one of the most interesting and open chats ever, considering her authority over the day-to-day task of regulating activities of border officials at their posts, enforcing the regular, orderly and secure migration to and from the migratory stations, and coordinating the overall processing of detainees (they were quick to clarify us that those immigrants, properly divided in the premises in males, females and kids/juveniles population, are not referred to as detainees but rather as temporary migrants in the process of relocation to their country of origin). Here we learned first-hand testimonies on the difficulties facing illegal immigration coming to Mexico, from severe conditions amid the smuggling process, to abuses and rapes suffered at the hands of delinquent groups, organized crime and other individuals. Particularly interesting during our meeting, though, was the contrast perceived between the tenacious determination of the federal officials to enforce the laws and to protect the immigrant if they happen to continue their travel to the U.S. (a quite paradoxical humanitarian task done by the Beta Group mainly in the northern border with the U.S.), and the overwhelming reality of illegal crossing from Guatemala largely outside the control of the authorities at no more than 50 meters away from the border check points themselves, something that we would witness the very next morning.

But before arriving to the border station in Ciudad Hidalgo we were later that day invited by Father Flor Maria Rigoni to his House of Migrant-Bethlehem Shelter, built at the outskirts of Tapachula, a peaceful place surrounded by both vast vegetation and a severely underdeveloped urban area. This shelter, hosting an average of 60 migrants per day who are allowed to stay for up to three nights, provides -mainly thanks to national and international donations- clean rooms, fresh breakfasts, clean water for washing clothes, dental basic services and spiritual comfort for the needy, and will probably be the only home those adults, mothers and children hoping to reach the American Dream may find for months, if they are lucky enough or have the means to support the long travel. In spite of this systemic adversity, a high-spirited, always smiling staff headed by Irmi and Jorge received us during breakfast with open arms, showed us the premises and the history of the shelter's network, and even shared with Dr. Iwashita and me the recent progress achieved over their technical school that provides immigrants wishing to learn with the practical knowledge, later a valid diploma and eventually with an official short-term permit to legally reside in Mexico if they wish.

Between the overwhelming reality of thousands of immigrants that particularly during the recent years also try to escape the violence in their homeland Central American countries, and the increasing difficulty of reaching the U.S., Father Flor's shelter is a place of peace, hope and defense for human rights. He was quoted in a 2016 Mexican newspaper interview as saying: "if you want to know a country, visit its borders, there is where all its problems combine, but also all its virtues". When we departed we happened to see a woman arriving at the shelter by taxi -surely from the border- with nothing more on her: no husband, no kids, no money and no food or extra clothes. Only their determination to cross Mexico into the U.S., and their human dignity, something clearly understood in the shelter. Setting foot into his oasis of humanity you could see glimmers of hope in the eyes of those migrants, and for that we thank Father Flor and his wonderful staff for the chance to grasp that moving experience.

The next morning, we planned to spend the whole day in the Ciudad Hidalgo-Tecun Uman, and Talisman-El Carmen border posts between Mexico and Guatemala, the very opposite border of Mexico's three thousand plus kilometers continental border with the U.S. And I must

admit, it was a thrilling experience far beyond my expectations. Being myself a careful observer of borders, mainly in maritime East Asia, I thought visiting my own country's southern border should be a more familiar experience, at least for me, in particular having the guidance of a relative who is himself well versed in trade and personal connections at the very same posts. But being largely at our own at the beginning, Dr. Iwashita and I started by arriving to the first official border post alone under a strange mixture of emotion and caution, knowing very well that the most interesting dynamics -and dangerous incidents, happen rather outside the international bridges. After a brief introduction by the Mexican officials to their main tasks there, they politely cautioned us about the unilateral attitude by the Guatemalan border officials to approve or not our departure, once we were to return to Mexico later in the morning. We couldn't verify the claim that a non-Mexican in the other side of that border might possibly need in fact to wait for up to 48 hours in the Guatemalan side before being allowed to re-enter Mexico thus leading us to re-evaluate whether we should enter or not and risk my Japanese friend alone on the other side of the border! Fortunately, we could exit Mexico without any delay, but we were discretely advised to avoid any misunderstanding with their neighbors by swiftly declaring our intention to cross just for a quick sightsee, a good Guatemalan coffee and breakfast, and appealing to their good common sense and honesty.



Border Bridge to Guatemala



“Free Passage” on the Border River

After crossing the bridge by foot -and seeing to our surprise the scale of open smuggling activities just meters away from the bridge on makeshift rafts—in fact timber over inflatable tires!—we approached the immigration post. To our surprise, the immigration guards were extremely friendly! After evaluating our cases we were allowed to enter the country after simply paying the equivalent of some 6 quetzals (less than one dollar) entrance fee; we even joked with them on how many beers and drinking water bottles should we bring back to them after our short trip. No doubt the joyful character of southern Mexicans and Central American nationals is something shared, even among officials, as we gladly discovered.

Some two hours of the finest street food, minor handicraft shopping and a couple of cold beers in Guatemala made us to forget that just besides the international bridge along the local market is the other border, the real one, which most illegal Central American and other nationalities' individuals use: that is a kind of no-man land where day to day non-official trade is done (no tax are declared, as suspected...), and where other criminal enterprises are surely happening -from drugs, cash, weapons and human traffic. We cautiously returned to the international bridge on our way back to Mexico (bringing indeed two beers and two water bottles which we eventually didn't have to hand over), and after a brief Mexican customs visit on board our Guatemalan motorcycle taxi, we were finally back... the first time.



Lunch at a Guatemala Restaurant

Soon afterward, led by our well-known contact there, we approached the trading posts along the Mexican side of the international river only meters away from the international bridge. Thanks to my relative we received the blessings of one of the leaders of those syndicate activities for what was about to be one of the most singular actions ever in my academic history in and outside a classroom. We boarded a raft guided by a young Salvadorian former member of the MS-13 gang, recently deported from the U.S. To our relief, he was most polite to both of us and even eager to tell us his gang history in Los Angeles while we approached the median line of the river without crossing to the Guatemalan side. Such a mixture of excitement, anxiety and amusement for the experience itself led us to forget the real danger a “normal” immigrant or a “returnee” might face in the border.

While watching the buzzing trade involving trucks, motorcycles, rafts and smugglers,

we also learned that, contrary to what you may expect, most of the trade of daily life goods is originating in Mexico for the high valued quetzal currency Guatemalan market. Confirming what previously I had seen in the Quintana Ro-Belize border, many Central Americans go to Mexico where commercial goods are usually cheaper. Even in Tapachula, discarded U.S. school yellow buses are daily used by low, middle and high-income Guatemalans alike to visit some big super markets stores like Walmart or Chedraui to shop big and returning across the border the same day. As we realized, the border is a place where, with the right capital and connections, huge legal and illegal fortunes are amassed, a socio-economic ecosystem where everybody can profit from.

After that second approach to the border line between Mexico and Guatemala, we were invited to visit the Talisman immigration post, some 22 miles away along the border, where we could observe the dimension of other trading activities, mainly used cars coming from the U.S. for the Central and South America market-and probably some others stolen in Mexican territory. We learned there that only three days drivers can transport their American vehicles throughout Mexican territory, a rule that has led to many accidents just for exhaustion in roads near the southern border; also, that trucks may face on a daily basis corrupt federal, state but mainly municipal police demanding bribes for this otherwise lucrative trade. Once on the international bridge, and again to our surprise, we received unusually courteous treatment, allowing us to cross the bridge until the very median line of the international border for some minutes where we quickly took snaps with locals, Mexican and Guatemalans alike. While guessing that such a deference might be quite difficult if we try, for instance, to sell a product or export some goods through formal -or informal- channels, we came back to the Mexican side knowing that we were taken care of in an exceptional manner.

The rest of the trip was basically sightseeing around Tapachula, amazed by the huge numbers of Central Americans roaming downtown -we were told so because we did not have a clear clue of how “different” a Central American look like compared with a Chiapas citizen, anyway-, and also by enjoying good blend at the Route of Coffee region just one hour away from the city into the mountains.

As I discovered amazing aspects of Mexico, of my countrymen and our Central American brothers struggling to cope with an intense southern border, I was truly honored to share with Professor Iwashita this experience and indeed encouraged to return there for a more systematic analysis of this amazing border.



In front of the Border River with Guatemala



**Presentation on Guatemala Borders at Association for Borderlands Studies
Convention in San Antonio, 2017**

*The essay was originally published as *Border Bites* 9 (2018):
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1S6GYoqy5NL3xX8eK9trdSJK21ISTihUW/view>

<Appendix> Curriculum Vitae for Dr. Ulises Granados Quiroz (January 30, 2017)

Name Dr. Ulises Granados Quiroz

e-mail ulises.granados@itam.mx

Current Position

Associate Professor, Coordinator, Asia Pacific Studies Program (PEAP), Academic Department of International Studies, Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México ITAM

url: <http://asiapacifico.itam.mx/es>

Address: Río Hondo 1, Col. Progreso Tizapán, Delegación Álvaro Obregón, 01080 Mexico City, Mexico

Tel (52.55) 56284000 ext 3966.

Mobile (52.55)21878149

Academic Studies

Undergraduate (B.A.) Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, UNAM

B.A. International Relations (Honors) 1989–1993. Gabino Barreda Medal 1993

Graduate (M.A.) Centre for Asian & African Studies, El Colegio de México COLMEX, 1994–1997. M.A. Asian & African Studies, Area China

Graduate (Ph.D.) Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology, The University of Tokyo, Japan

1999–2003. Ph.D. Letters (East Asian History and Society)

Work Experience

Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social Administrative.

Office of Personnel. Hidalgo State Office. 1989–1991

Morelos State Office. 1991–1993

Mexico Ministry of Foreign Affairs SRE

Administrative. Matias Romero Institute of Diplomatic Studies IMRED, 1993

Political Analyst Level 27. General Directorate of Asia and Africa, 1993–1994

Formato 21, Radio (Mexico) NHK, Japan

News Commentator in Japan. 2002

NHK World Radio Japan. Spanish Section. News Anchor & Translator, 2000–2012

Utsunomiya University, Japan Faculty of International Studies, 2001–2006.

Daito Bunka University, Japan Faculties of Economy, Letters and Law, 2002–2006.

International Christian University, Japan Language Department, 2003–2006.

Sophia University, Japan School of Global Studies, 2005–2006.

The University of Tokyo, Japan Associate Professor, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, 2006–2012.

Conferences

“Chinese Ocean Policy in the South China Sea. A Transitional Period, 1946–1952” (delivered at the conference Human and Regional Security around the South China Sea, Oslo, Norway, June 2–4, 2000).

“Japanese Empire’s Expansion into the South China Sea –Colonization and Conflict, 1902–1939” (delivered at the International Conference on Conflict Management, Peace Economics and Development, Cracow, Poland, October 18–20, 2002).

“As the Republican China meets the Southern Sea Frontier –Ocean Identity in the Making, 1915–1936” (delivered at the conference As China Meets the World: China’s Changing Position in the International Community (1840–2000). Vienna, Austria, May 17–19, 2004).

“The South China Sea islands during the Ming and Qing: levels of geographical knowledge and political control” (delivered at the Ninth Biennial Conference of the China Studies Association of Australia, Bendigo, Australia, June 30–July 3, 2005).

“The 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty and the South China Sea islands: old British and French colonial claims in a post-war era? An interpretation” (delivered at the AAS Annual Meeting, San Francisco, California, April 9, 2006).

“Ocean Frontier Expansion and the Kalayaan Islands Group claim: Philippines’ early post war pragmatism in the South China Sea” (delivered at the International Convention of Asian Scholars – ICAS5, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, August 2–3, 2007).

“The South China Sea and its Coral Reefs during the Ming and Qing: levels of Geographical knowledge and political control” (delivered at the 52th Conference of Eastern Studies – ICES52, Tokyo, Japan, May 18, 2007).

“Maritime Regions as Center of the Periphery of Nation States: The Case of the South China Sea” (delivered at the International Convention of Asian Scholars – ICAS6, Daejeon, South Korea, August 6–9, 2009).

“The Frontier of China at Sixty Years of the Founding of the People’s Republic” (delivered at the 2009 Melbourne Conference on China: 60 Years of the People’s Republic – Transformations and Challenges, Melbourne, Australia, August 13–14, 2009).

“Maritime Navigation in South China during the Late-Qing: the search for Modernization in Guangdong Province” (delivered at the 2010 Melbourne Conference on China: Chinese Elites and their Rivals –Past, Present and Future, Melbourne, Australia, July 19–20, 2010).

“Modernization and Regionalism in South China: Notes on Coastal Navigation in Guangdong Province during the late-Nineteenth, early-Twentieth Century” (delivered at the Joint Conference of the Association of Asian Studies (AAS) and the International Convention of Asian Scholars (ICAS7), “70 Years of Asian Studies,” Honolulu, Hawaii, March 31–April 3, 2011).

“United States’ New Leverage in the South China Sea? Current Trends amid a New Asia-Pacific Strategy” (delivered at the East Asian Security Symposium and Conference, Beijing PRC, June 25–30, 2012).

“United States’ New Interest in the Western Pacific Ocean: Building Strategies for the Maritime East Asia” (delivered at the International Convention of Asian Scholars – ICAS8, Macau, PRC, June 27, 2013).

“US involvement in the Sino-Japanese Diaoyu/Senkaku conflict: finding solutions for the stability of Northeast Asia” (delivered at the East Asian Security Symposium and Conference, Beijing PRC, June 24–29, 2013).

“The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Fundamental Changes of Adjustments to a New Regional Scenario?” (delivered at the conference Japan: Decline of Transformation of an Economic Power?, Faculty of Economy, UNAM, Mexico City, September 18, 2013).

“Mexico-China Political Relationship Perspectives: Limits and Challenges in the Bilateral Understanding” (II International Seminar “Latin America, the Caribbean and China: Conditions and Challenges in the XXI Century, RedAlc-China, UNAM, May 26–28, 2014).

“New Threats to the Chinese National Security in the Global Age” (Cechimex UNAM, March 26, 2014).

“The Code of Conduct in the South China Sea: The Chinese Perspective” (Biennial Conference, Association for Asian Studies of Australia, Perth, Australia, July 9–11, 2014).

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“India’s new presence in the South China Sea: clashes of strategies or a new dawn of cooperation in Southeast Asia?” (delivered at the China’s Peripheral (Neighboring) Diplomacy to Build an Asia-Pacific Dream “中国的周边外交—构建亚太梦,” 12th Annual East Asia Security Symposium and Conference, CFAU, Beijing, PRC, June 25, 2015).

“The Mexico-Australia-China Triangle: Model of Cooperation in a Globalized Asia Pacific” (delivered at the 9th International Conventions of Asian Scholars ICAS 9, July 7, 2015, Adelaide, Australia).

“Reforma al Sistema de Administración Oceánica en China: Motivos, Avances e Implicaciones Regionales” (delivered at the Tercer Seminario Internacional China, América Latina y el Caribe: condiciones y retos en el siglo XXI, UNAM, June 1, 2016).

“China’s People Liberation Army Navy Goes Global: Between International Law and Power Politics” (delivered at the ISA Asia-Pacific Conference 2016, Hong Kong, June 25–27, 2016, CUHK).

Keynote speaker at the 2nd Inter-American Dialogue-Japan Association of Latin America and the Caribbean IAC-JALAC, Tokyo, Japan, October 30, 2016.

“The Evolution of the South China Sea Disputes: Notes from a Historian” (delivered at the 8th International Conference The South China Sea: Cooperation for Regional Security and Development,” Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, Nha Trang City, Vietnam, November 14, 2016).

Summer Courses Coordination

ITAM Summer Course, East China Normal University ECNU, Shanghai, June 16/ July 4, 2014.

Publications

I

B.A. final paper. “People’s Republic of China’s Hong Kong Recovery Process” (UNAM, 1994), Honors, International Relations.

M.A. Thesis. “Spratly Islands: their Geo-Strategic Importance for the People’s Republic of China’s National Security towards the end of the XXth Century” (El Colegio de Mexico, 1997), Asian and African Studies.

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II Academic Articles

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Scholarships received

Sasakawa Peace Foundation/The Tokyo Foundation, 1994–1997. El Colegio de Mexico. M.A. studies scholarship.

Japanese government 1998–1999. The University of Tokyo, Institute of Oriental Culture. Researcher scholarship

Japanese government 1999–2002. The University of Tokyo, PhD scholarship, Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology.

Languages

Spanish (native), English, Japanese, Mandarin (advanced), French, Portuguese, Italian (translation)

Membership to Professional Organizations

Mexico National Research System Level 1 Researcher SNI (2014) Association for Asian Studies: AAS

The International Studies Association: ISA

Asian Studies Association of Australia: ASAA

Asia and Africa Studies Latin American Association: ALADAA

Who's Who in the World (2011–)

Editorial Board Mexico and the Pacific Rim (MyCP) Editorial Board Negocios-Promexico Magazine

2000 Outstanding Intellectuals of the 21st Century (2013–)

News commentator at NHK, CNN, BBC, Radio France Internacional, Xinhua, Radio China Internacional, Canal del Congreso, Foreign Affairs Latinoamérica, Grupo Fórmula, Vértice Internacional, Agence France Press, Televisa, Bloomberg, etc.

Areas of Academic Research

Modern and contemporary history of Asia, International Relations of the Asia Pacific, Maritime History of China, Asia-American Interactions, Socio-Economic Integration in East and Southeast Asia, National Security in Asia

Courses (2017)

Introduction to International Relations Japan, China and Southeast Asia National Security of China

Invited professor: Center for Asian and African Studies at El Colegio de Mexico, University Seminary of Asian Studies SUEA at UNAM, Diplomatic Academy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs SRE



Ulises in his Class

About the Contributors

Akihiro Iwashita

Professor of Slavic-Eurasian Research Center, Hokkaido University

Alexander Bukh

Associate Professor of Political Science and International Relations, Victoria University of Wellington

Hyunjoo Naomi Chi

Associate Professor of Graduate School of Public Policy, Hokkaido University, and Co-ordinator, East Eurasian Studies at Slavic-Eurasian Research Center

Takeshi Hamashita

Dean of School of Asia-Pacific Studies, Sun Yat-sen University, and Professor Emeritus, University of Tokyo

Yoshifumi Nakai

Professor Emeritus, Gakushuin University

Jarosław Jańczak

Professor of Faculty of Political Science and Journalism, Adam Mickiewicz University

Edward Boyle

Associate Professor, International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Nichibunken), and Co-editor, *Eurasia Border Review*

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