

Opinions on China Borderland Studies and National Security

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the establishment of China Borderland Studies has received more attention and discussion in the academic circles. In the past, scholars have defined related concepts of borderland and borderland studies in their works, but it seems that they have not reached a consensus and haven't put a certain concept into circulation. In fact, the importance of borderland studies has been highlighted in modern times because it is closely related to national security issues. Then, the focus of this research is no longer to explain its importance, but to face reality, based on professionalism, address specific border issues, and put forward strategies and suggestions for solving problems in response to President Xi's concept of maintaining national security in key areas. If the research gradually solves a series of practical problems, the birth of China Borderland Studies will be just around the corner.

Keywords: China Borderland Studies, border areas, national security

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the establishment of Chinese borderland studies has received more attention and discussion in the academic circles. For example, Mr. Ma Dazheng pointed out that since the 1980s, China Borderland Studies have set off a third climax, and the construction of "China Borderland Studies" has become "the historical mission of China's borderland researchers who shoulder the important task of inheriting and exploring."¹ In addition, he also said that the construction of China Borderland Studies should become the common duty and urgent task of contemporary borderland studies scholars.² Professor Lin Wenxun also pointed out that the establishment of China Borderland Studies "is not only a realistic objective need, but also an inevitable requirement for the development of the discipline."³ Against such an academic background, research on borderland studies has also become popular, and the results have gradually enriched. So what is the borderland studies, what is the research object, scope and content of borderland studies,

and what is the nature of borderland studies? A series of conceptual issues need scholars to define one by one. And what is the inevitable connection between the rise of borderland studies and national security issues? This thesis will try to discuss it.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW OF CHINA BORDERLAND STUDIES

The articles on the study of borderland studies conducted special studies in recent years are as follows: Xing Yulin, "Several Issues on Chinese Borderland Studies and Its Research" (China's Borderland History and Geography Studies, 1999, 01); Liu Xiaoting, "On Modern Frontier and Frontier Studies" (Journal of Harbin University, 1999, 01); Bu Ping, "Let China's Borderland Studies Possess Stronger Sense of Times" (China's Borderland History and Geography Studies, 2001, 01); Ma Dazheng, "Thought Fragments to Construct Borderland Study of China" (China's Borderland History and Geography Studies, 2003, 03); Fang Tie, "Some Reflectin on Constructing Borderland Study of China" (China's Borderland History and Geography Studies, 2007, 02); Ma Dazheng, "The Construction of Chinas Borderland Studies: A Historic Mission of the Borderland-Studies Researchers" (Journal of Yunnan Normal University, 2008, 05); Zhang Yun, "Tibetan Studies and the Construction of China's Borderland Studies" (Journal of Yunnan Normal University, 2008, 05); Li Guoqiang, "On the Disciplinary Construction of Chinas

¹ Ma Dazheng, Chinese Frontier Studies in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Developing Border Discipline [M]. Harbin: Heilongjiang Educational Press, 1997.

² Ma Dazheng, Thought Fragments to Construct Borderland Study of China [J]. China's Borderland History and Geography Studies, 2003 (03).

³ Lin Wenxun, A Preliminary Exploration of Subject Construction and Teaching Reform [M]. Kunming: Yunnan University Press, 2010.

Borderland Studies" (Journal of Yunnan Normal University, 2008, 05); Li Zhigang, Tian Xiaozhong, "A Summary of the Series of Lectures in the "High-Level Forum on History" of the National Key Subject of Specialized History at Yunnan University: A Theoretical Discussion of Chinese Borderland Studies from the Perspective of Globalization" (Thinking, 2009, 05); Li Shangying, "Ma Dazheng and the Construction of China's Borderland Studies: A Review of Collected Essays of Ma Dazheng" (Journal of Yunnan Normal University, 2012, 03); Lou Guipin, "A Historical Investigation on the Proposal and Dissemination of the Concept of 'Study on Frontier' in Modern China" (Academic Exploration, 2012, 08); Chen Mingfu, "The first monograph exploring the construction of the disciplinary system of China's Borderland Studies — Comment on Professor Zheng Shan's 'Introduction to Chinese Borderland Studies'" (China's Borderland History and Geography Studies, 2013, 04); Xing Guangcheng, "Several Issues on the Study of China Borderland Studies" (China's Borderland History and Geography Studies, 2014, 01); Zhou Weizhou, "A Few Thoughts on the Subject of China's Borderland Studies" (China's Borderland History and Geography Studies, 2014, 01); Wang Xin, "Several Theoretical Challenges Facing the Construction of China Borderland Studies — Take Lattimore, Nicola di Cosmo, and Peter Perdue as Examples" (Thinking, 2014, 04); Yuan Jian, "Borderland Ethnography and Borderland Studies of China: Concepts, Approaches and Possibility" (Qinghai Journal of Ethnology, 2015, 03); Lin Wenxun, Luo Qun, Pan Xianlin, "The Borderland Studies of Yunnan University: A Review and Prospect Based on Subject Building" (China's Borderland History and Geography Studies, 2015, 03); Ma Dazheng, "Chinese Scholars' Exploration of the Construction of Chinese Borderland Studies in the New Century" (Borderland Studies of China, 2015, 01); Sun Yong, Wang Chunhuan, Zhu Jinchun, "Research on the Theoretical Framework and Major Issues of Borderland Studies" (Wu Chuke and Zhao Lin chief ed. Report on Theoretical Innovation and Development of China Borderland Studies 2015, 2015), etc. These 19 articles discuss a series of issues concerning the discipline construction of China Borderland Studies from different perspectives and disciplines. There are also very important academic monographs. Ma Dazheng and Liu Ti's "Chinese Frontier Studies in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Developing Border Discipline", Zheng Shan's "Introduction to China Borderland Studies", Luo Chongmin's "New Theory of China's Borderland Politics", Wu Chuke's "Chinese Borderland Politics", Yu Xiaofeng, Xu Lili, and Li Zhengyuan's "Introduction to Border Security Studies", Liang Shuanglu's "Frontier Economics: International Regional Economic Integration and China's Frontier Economic Development", "Introduction to China's Frontier Economic Development" edited by Yuan Qingshou and

Niu Delin, "Border Defense" edited by Li Xing, Zhou Ping's "Study on China's Border Governance", Chen Lin's "Research on China's Borderland Governance", etc. These academic papers and works have basically outlined the name definition, research object, content and sub-discipline framework of China Borderland Studies.

The authors were inspired by reading relevant literature materials: First, many scholars have defined the basic concepts of borderland and borderland studies in articles or works, but it seems that they have not reached a consensus and have been recognized by everyone, so that a certain concept or definition can be used as a generally recognized concept; Second, about what is the basic theory of borderland studies as a subject, everyone has different opinions, but they are inconsistent; Third, the study of borderland studies has highlighted its importance in modern times because it is closely related to national security issues, so the focus of this research is no longer to explain its importance. Fourth, the existing academic achievements and various research institutions, researchers and teams of borderland studies are the strong pillars for borderland studies to become a discipline.

III. CHINA BORDERLAND STUDIES ARE CLOSELY RELATED TO NATIONAL SECURITY

To construct an independent discipline of China Borderland Studies, to scientifically and rationally define the subject's name definition, research object, content and sub-discipline framework is the most basic element and condition for becoming an independent discipline. In fact, scholars and experts such as Ma Dazheng, Xing Yulin, Xing Guangcheng, and Zhou Weizhou have all made comprehensive and in-depth discussions on this aspect. The authors believe that China Borderland Studies is a comprehensive and interdisciplinary subject with complex content and numerous majors. As the discipline of China Borderland Studies, the research content must involve the ethnic groups, religions, cultures, customs, etc. of the groups living there for generations. So is it possible to take Mr. Fei Xiaotong's theory of "the structure of the multi-ethnic integration of the Chinese nation" as the basic theory of frontier studies? Because as an independent new discipline, it must be supported by a relatively mature theory in order to make the discipline develop in a deeper direction. In addition, the researchers have been explaining the importance of establishing this discipline from various levels and angles when constructing the discipline of China Borderland Studies. However, it seems that they lack the discussion of how to construct a discipline necessary for the subject theory, that is, there is a lack of excavation and discussion on what hardware and software are needed for China Borderland Studies as a

discipline. People have been saying that borderland studies is ready to come out, but it hasn't been seen yet. Then it is necessary for the researchers to reflect on what went wrong. Since the mid-nineteenth century, Western powers have poured into China to seize colonies, plunder resources, deepen the national crisis, and intensify internal and external conflicts, but the strong challenges have gradually awakened the Chinese people. With the development of contemporary economic globalization, full coverage of the Internet, and the increasing development of information and communications, the importance of China Borderland Studies has once again been highlighted. Then the researchers need to reflect on why this is. Undoubtedly, all this is closely related to national security issues, so it shows the necessity and urgency and reality of research as a discipline. Looking back at the course of China Borderland Studies, what the researchers should do is obvious. In addition, the research methods of borderland studies also reveal that it is not possible to copy the research methods of general disciplines, but to be problem-oriented and solve the problems one by one, because it is more often a realistic problem facing the country. The research should serve the reality and provide suggestions for China to solve practical problems, instead of always emphasizing its importance.

IV. THE CORE ISSUE OF CHINA BORDERLAND STUDIES: NATIONAL SECURITY

From a realistic point of view, the strategic position of China Borderland Studies includes three aspects: the border areas are the front lines of China's national defense; second, the frontier of reform and opening up is the frontier stage for Chinese to enter the world and the frontier stage for demonstrating China's strength; third, it is an important part of contemporary China's sustainable development. Border issues are divided into two types, political and economic. The political category mainly includes separatism and anti-separatism, mainly the three separatist forces of Taiwan independence, Xinjiang independence and Tibet independence. The Northeast Frontier is mainly the Korean Peninsula issue that will spread to the Northeast Frontier. There are also border issues left over from history, such as the Sino-Indian border. The coastal areas and territorial seas mainly involve three areas, the Diaoyu Islands, the Nansha Islands, and the border demarcation of East China Sea. The economic category involves transnational crimes, such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, gun smuggling, etc., and four key regions have been formed from this, namely Taiwan, Xinjiang, Tibet, and coastal areas and territorial seas. There is also a secondary key area — the Northeast Frontier. Therefore, when facing the reality, the researchers will feel the urgency and importance of constructing the discipline of China Borderland Studies. At the same time, it is also a must realize that the

essential core of borderland studies is the issue of national security. The resolution of China's border issues is directly linked to national security.

However, the researchers must also notice that there are historical experiences that can be used for reference as well as actual successful cases for reference in the problems of China Borderland Studies. China is a unified multi-ethnic country with a vast territory, a long history, and a splendid culture. It occupies an important position in world history. China's borderland is the product of the long-term development of China's unified multi-ethnic country. It not only has obvious natural characteristics, but also has long-standing historical characteristics. Its long history continues in the tortuous development process. In the long years, the Central Plains has been in constant contact with the border areas, including economic and cultural exchanges, political jurisdictions and even wars. Historically, the historical border issues have been solved through the methods and policies of farming, cajolement, marriage for peace, local officials, reforming the land, and governing according to customs. After entering the mid-nineteenth century, with the tremendous changes in the development situation of Chinese society and borders, China's borders also faced a series of severe challenges. The capitalist colonial aggressors have brought a new border crisis to China. This is a national crisis of a completely different nature from previous China's border issues, and China's history of independent development is in danger of being interrupted. However, the strong challenge has gradually awakened the Chinese people. After more than a hundred years of difficult and tortuous exploration and struggle, a unified and multi-ethnic China has risen again, and China's borderland has also entered a new stage of development on the basis of inheriting thousands of years of historical heritage.

Since the reform and opening up, China's basic national policy has centered on economic construction, and China's border areas have gradually become a strategic position that integrates from the frontline of national defense to the frontline of border defense and opening up. Economically, the lagging economic development of the border areas and the unbalanced development of the eastern coastal areas cannot be fundamentally changed in the short term. There are many ethnic groups in the border areas, the economic development is backward, and the ecology is fragile. "The Belt and Road" economic development initiative brings opportunities and challenges to the economic development of the border areas. Politically, ethnic unity and social stability in the border areas are the overall situation. However, there still exists negative factors affecting national unity and social stability. Culturally, the overall education level of the border areas is not high, and it is difficult to change the situation in a short period of time. With regard to the

surrounding environment, Southeast Asian countries have experienced rapid economic development, and competition with China (especially the southwestern border regions in China) is becoming increasingly fierce in terms of capital, raw materials, markets, and talents. The social and political structures of countries in Asia or the Middle East that are adjacent to China are in a period of reorganization, and their political turmoil and conflicts between countries may affect the social stability and opening up of China's border areas. The transformation of the international political landscape from bipolar to multipolar and the adjustment of the international economic structure have created new competition.

Judging from the actual situation in China's border areas, there are still factors that induce social unrest and undermine social stability. Local and regional emergencies that affect social stability occur from time to time. The struggle against separatism is a long-term task for the border areas, especially Tibet and Xinjiang. The struggle between secession and anti-separatism is a serious political struggle. Anti-separatism struggles in different regions have both common points and different characteristics, which will be manifested in different ways and should be analyzed in detail. Under the principles of safeguarding national unity, sovereignty integrity, and national unity, it is necessary to formulate flexible policies and strategies.

There are many ethnic groups living in the western region of China, and there are special social conditions. The "three forces" have had a great impact on the ethnic relations in the border areas and brought threats to the local social and political stability. If China focuses on economic development in the "Belt and Road" economic development initiative, but does not pay attention to social stability issues, or ignores social stability issues caused by factors such as ethnic religions, it may have a great negative impact on economic development, thus affecting the process of "The Belt and Road" economic development strategy.

In short, based on the above basic understanding, the strategic position of China Borderland Studies is self-evident, and it is inextricably related to China's politics, economy, society, and culture, which affects the whole country. Therefore, in order to stabilize the border and carry out "The Belt and Road" economic development strategy, it is a must to pay attention to the issue of social stability strategy. Without the social stability strategy in border areas, the entire border development strategy is incomplete. Stability and economy, politics, and culture are interrelated and interact with each other. The focus on China's borders is closely related to national security. Therefore, the core essential issue of China Borderland Studies is national security.

V. CONCLUSION

In summary, facing reality, the relationship between China Borderland Studies and national security issues is clear at a glance, so the practical significance of constructing the discipline of China Borderland Studies becomes more urgent. Looking back on history, we face it frankly. The ancient border issues have been properly resolved through the efforts of generations of wise rulers, and Chinese are well aware that the nature of the so-called frontier issues is, in general, internal contradictions among the people of the country. However, returning to today's reality, behind China's border issues, there are actually shadows of the manipulation of international forces, as well as the impact of the interweaving of various contradictions in China's surrounding areas, and international and regional contradictions are intertwined with internal contradictions. Therefore, the difficulty and complexity of solving the problem are increased. As an ordinary researcher, it is necessary to focus people's attention on each specific problem, analyze specific problems one by one, and solve them one by one. The so-called solution is to apply professional knowledge and methods to the specific problems of the frontier, and put forward strategies and suggestions for solving the key areas of national security proposed by President Xi. Only when the strategies and suggestions the researchers put forward after earnest research have solved the real problems, then the birth of China Borderland Studies is just around the corner.

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