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In present-day China, ethnic communities have become more conscious of their relationship with the state and their status within it. This has created a disharmony of coexistence in relation to the set parameters of China’s territorial boundaries, posing challenges to a unified “Chinese Nation.” This paper looks at the concept and evolution of the notion of ‘Chinese Nation’ (Zhōnghuá Mínzú 中华民族) as a unified entity to represent various ethnic communities at a time when China is confronted with questions of identity and whom it represents. As China’s leader President Xi Jinping promotes the tag ‘China Dream’ to consolidate the unity of the nation, dissenting voices within continue to seek their own localised identities, a desire that can challenge the very existence of the Chinese Nation.

Today’s world is interconnected yet divided by visible and invisible boundaries. Visible boundaries are those that have been defined by land, sea, and air, though ambiguously. Invisible boundaries are those in the process of being defined in cyber space. Hence, as connections exist, communities within a particular boundary have become more conscious of their relationship with the state and their status within it. In particular, countries that have a multiplicity of communities coexisting within the set parameters of a boundary face greater challenges of sustaining a unified nation. These examples have recently become prominent. This paper looks at China as such a case, which has all along advocated the notion of “Chinese Nation” (Zhōnghuá Mínzú 中华民族) as a unified entity to represent various communities. However, even with the phenomenal growth of its economy, communities within it have started to question their status in this nation-state. This has created a disharmony of coexistence of ethnic

communities, and China is consequently confronted with issues of what the Chinese nation is and whom it represents. Does the People's Republic of China with the Communist Party as the sole ruling authority represent all 56 nationalities? Are there strong dissenting voices? What is the broader framework of 'Greater China' and who are the represented entities of this political ideological pursuit? Can the dominating Han nationality remain the main representative of China? More importantly, within the Han community, are there voices of fragmentation and a demand for a separate state? As the leader President Xi Jinping advocates the tag 'China Dream' to consolidate the unity of the nation, dissenting voices within continue to seek their own localized identities, which is a desire that can challenge the very existence of the "Chinese Nation."

Evolution of the Term "Chinese Nation"

Before expounding upon the evolution of the term "Chinese Nation," it is essential to have a basic understanding of terms such as "state," "nation," and "nation-state." The term "state" in a broad sense relates to a body of government, which is more a political terminology. The term "nation" is more associated with the people living in the politically defined state, a specifically referring to the notion that the people living together have shared belief of being connected to each other. However, "nation-state" linked people with shared culture and common language. Benedict Anderson, in his book, *Imagined Communities*, pointed out that a nation is a socially constructed community, imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group.¹ Hence, it is to be explored whether the people and communities in China perceive themselves as a part of China as a nation or if there are differing opinions.

The term "Chinese Nation" dates back to the early twentieth century. In 1902, the term "Chinese Nation" was first used by Liang Qichao in the article, "General Development Trends of Academic Ideology in China," published in the journal *Xīn Mǐn Cóng Bào*.² Later in 1905, Liang Qichao used the term "Chinese Nation" more than seven times in his article "Observations Concerning the Chinese Nation in History (Zhōnghuá Mǐnzú)," referring to Han nationality as the main nationality and the inheritor of the

1 Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 6-7.

2 Jin Chongji, "The Formation of the Chinese Nation," *Qishi Journal*, 2 no. 1, (2010).

Yánhuáng (炎黄). Hence, it was Liang Qichao who had defined the notion of China from simply being an old civilization to a modern territorial nation-state.³

The term “Chinese Nation” (*Zhōnghuá Mínzú* 中华民族) was then propagated by Zou Rong, a revolutionary of the anti-Qing and anti-Manchu, to link the Han race to the Chinese Nation, see Chart I. In his book *The Revolutionary Army* (*Gémìngjūn* 革命军) published in 1903, he divided the entire “Yellow Race” into two sub-categories: the Siberian Race and the Chinese Race. While the Siberian race included the Mongols, Manchus, Turks, Hungarians, and other people in Europe, the Chinese race was further divided into two categories: the Chinese (specifically referring to the Han Race), and those who were Koreans, Tibetans, and other East Asians. In this sense, Zou Rong only looked at the Han race as representing the entire Chinese Nation. The term “Chinese Nation,” hence, denoted the racial-kinship bond of the Chinese and their ties to the land.⁴

Later, Zhang Binglin (also known as Zhang Taiyan), who was a philologist and a philosopher, used a similar correlation to relate Han nationality with the Chinese Nation. In his arguments in 1907, he explained the terms Hua, Xia, and Han, whereby he defined Hua as land, with Xia and Han denoting race. He pointed out that as per the Chinese dictionary, “the people of the Middle Kingdom” (*Zhōngguó rén* 中国人) were known as Xia. By correlating the terms Xia and Han, he justified his argument that the Han nationality (*Hànzú* 汉族) was equivalent to the Chinese Nation (*Zhōnghuá Mínzú* 中华民族).⁵

However, Yang Du, a political reformer, expounded on a systematic exploration of the term “Chinese Nation” in his article, “Theory of Gold and Iron Doctorine (*Jīntiě zhǔyǐ shuō* 金铁主义说),” published in 1907.⁶ He argued that the Chinese Nation was not related to one ethnic nationality, but was a geographic and cultural concept. He stated that the monarch was an agent of the nation and a representation of all people, thereby refuting the distinction between the Manchus and the Han Chinese.⁷ While all these

3 Zhao Suisheng, *A Nation-state by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 45.

4 Zou Rong in Frank Dikötter, “Race in China: The Construction of the Han” in *China Inside Out: Contemporary Chinese Nationalism and Transnationalism*, eds., Pal Nyiri Joana and Breidenbach (Budapest and New York: central European University Press, 2005), 190.

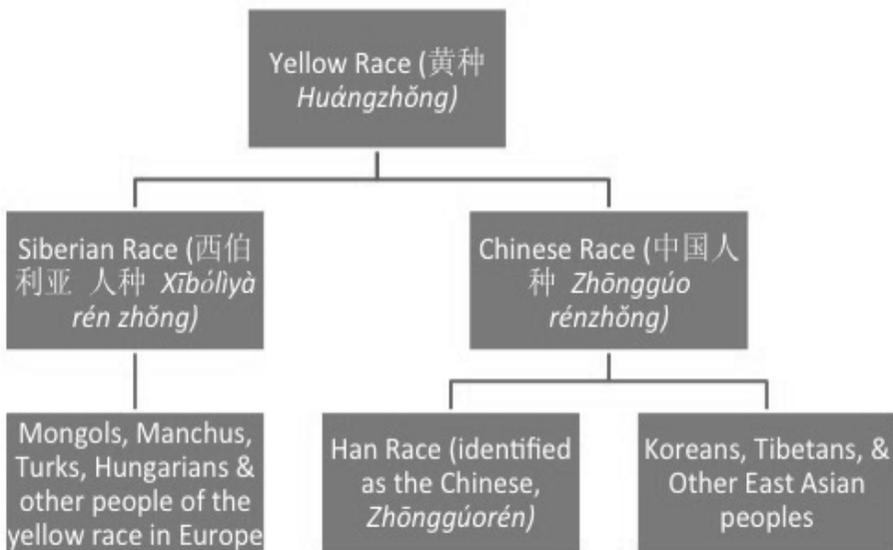
5 Frank Dikötter ed., *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan: Historical and Contemporary Perspective* (UK: C. Hurst & Co., 1997), 50.

6 Jin Chongji, “The Formation of the Chinese Nation.”

7 Wang Hui, “Zhang Taiyan’s Concept of the Individual and Modern Chinese Identity,” in *Becoming*

discourses existed in the early twentieth century to define the Chinese Nation, John Fitzgerald, a professor at La Trobe University, opines that, traditionally, Chinese people had a custom of referring to their historical community by the names of dynasties (such as Qin, Han, Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing) rather than by country, implying that there was no concrete concept of a nation existing till that time.⁸

CHART I Zou Rong's Classification of Races



Source: Zou Rong *The Revolutionary Army* (1903) in Frank Dikötter, "Race in China: The Construction of the Han" in *China Inside Out: Contemporary Chinese Nationalism and Transnationalism* eds. Pal Nyiri Joana and Breidenbach (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2005), 190.

Chinese: Passages to Modernity and Beyond, ed. Wen Hsin-yeh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 258.

⁸ John Fitzgerald, "The Nationless State: The Search for a Nation in Modern Chinese Nationalism" in *Chinese Nationalism*, ed., Jonathan Unger (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 57. Quoted in Zhao Suisheng, *A Nation-state by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 45.

The term was widely used after 1912, when the President of the New Republic, Yuan Shikai, espoused the concept of the “Chinese Nation” that was later expanded by Sun Yat-sen. The abdication of the Qing Emperor led to controversy over the status of Tibet’s and Mongolia, as they owed no allegiance to the New Republic even when the Qing territories were formally handed over. Tibet and Mongolia’s position was rejected by the new Chinese state, both by the Republic of China and later by the PRC. Sun Yat-sen reinterpreted the term to have broader reach and to include Han (Hàn 汉, the red), Manchus (Mǎn 满, the yellow), Mongolian (Měng 蒙, the blue), Hui (Huí 回, the white)⁹, and Tibetans (Zàng 藏, the black). He put forth the concept of the “Republic of Five Nationalities” (or Five Races under One Union, Wǔ zú gōnghé / Wǔ zú hé wèi yī tǐ 五族共和 / 五族合为一体). Sun Yat-sen in his famous *Three Principles of the People* (*Sān mǐn Zhǔyì* 三民主义) proposed the idea of unity of the nation based on blood ties. He wrote:

The greatest force is common blood. The Chinese belong to the Yellow race because they come from the blood stock of the Yellow race. The blood of the ancestors is transmitted by heredity down through the race, making blood kinship a powerful force.¹⁰

Historically, the Chinese have had a very strong concept of “insider” and “outsider.” Those under the domain of the central state’s territories were distinguished from those outside. Apart from the “civilized” people, such as the *Xia* within the territories, the peripheral communities were viewed as barbarians: *Yi* (*Dōngyí* 东夷) in the east, *Rong* (*Xīróng* 西戎) in the west, *Di* (*Běidí* 北狄) in the north, and the *Man* (*Nánmán* 南蛮) in the south. Hence, the five nationalities incorporated in the concept of the “Republic of Five Nationalities” was an inclusion of barbarians in the Chinese state, while the exclusion from the majority and dominating nationality continued. The term

9 This refers to the Turkish people living in the western part of China and representing the Muslim community. In the present day, they are the Uighur nationality.

10 Sun Yat-sen, *Three Principles of the People* (1932), 9, quoted in Elena Barabantseva, *Overseas Chinese Ethnic Minorities and Nationalism: De-centering China* (London & New York: Routledge, 2011), 30.

is different from “*Huáxià*” (华夏),¹¹ Han people (*Hànrén* 汉人),¹² and Tang people (*Tángrén* 唐人),¹³ descendants of the Yellow Emperor (*Yánhuáng Zǐsūn* 炎黄子孙).¹⁴ By the 1980s, the use of the term Hua people (*Huárén* 华人)¹⁵ was a representative term for the majority nationality. This led to a debate over what the representative nationality of China (*Gúozú* 国族) was.

Jin Chongji, in an article written in the authoritative magazine *Seeking Truth* (*Qíushì* 求是), argues that the Chinese Nation is formed over a long historical period and now represents all the people of various ethnic groups in China, and even the overseas Chinese diaspora who identify with the Chinese nation. This course of development can be divided into two phases: the earlier phase of gradual evolution that took thousands of years; and a gradual process of identification of all ethnic nationalities with the Chinese Nation in modern history to struggle against foreign aggressors.¹⁶ Hence, ethnicity as a factor was placed at the heart of the unity of the nation.

Nationalism and “Greater China”; Defining the “Chinese Nation”

The vision of a “Chinese Nation” was reinterpreted in the concept of “Greater China” (*Dà Zhōnghuá Qū* 大中华区). This concept did not originate in China, but was propagated by Western scholars. In 1934, the American geographer George Cressey used the term “Greater China,” a geographic extension of the Chinese Empire that included China proper (18 provinces directly under the central administrative bureaucracy, consisting of a mostly Han population) and Outer China (also called ‘dependencies’; ethnic

11 *Huá* means “illustrious,” for the beautiful clothing of the Chinese people; and *Xià* means “grand” to signify the ceremonial etiquettes of China. *Huáxià* referred to a confederation of tribes existing on the banks of the Yellow River, the descendants of which were later the Han ethnic group. They represented a more civilized society in contrast to the barbarians. *Huáxià* was a term used collectively to represent the three successive dynasties of the Xià, Shāng, and Zhōu, in which three different ethnic groups or tribes ruled China that were merged later.

12 Han Wendi and Han Jingdi were the main rulers of the Han dynasty, who made Han into one of the most prosperous dynastic rule. As Han is still the majority ethnic group in China, many Chinese are referred to as Han people.

13 The Tang was arguably the most prosperous and flourishing dynasty. The reign of Zhengguang at the peak of the Tang dynasty was a result of ethnic intermixing. Hence, overseas Chinese communities in Chinatowns are generally referred to as Tang people.

14 The Yellow River is regarded as the cradle of Chinese civilization. In Chinese mythology, the Yan and Yellow Emperor belonged to two tribes and were responsible for assimilating the two cultures.

15 Refer to the overseas Chinese living in the peripheral regions of Mainland China.

16 Chongji, “The Formation of the Chinese Nation.”

minority areas of Manchuria, Mongolia, Chinese Turkestan, and Tibet that were under Chinese state suzerainty).¹⁷ Later in 1940, Owen Lattimore redefined it to incorporate “China with the Great Wall” (China proper) and six “frontier zones” (Manchukuo, Outer Mongolia, Inner Mongolia, Chinese Turkestan, Tibet proper, and the Tibet-Chinese frontier provinces of Qinghai and Xikang).¹⁸ The assimilationist vision stressed the organic entity of all the people living within the political boundaries of China and also the fusion of non-Han groups into a broader Chinese Nation with the Han nationality remaining dominant.¹⁹ This vision conceptualizes unity based on biological factors rather than territorial boundaries. Hence, racial discourse was the underlining factor to define the “Chinese Nation” in modern times whether in Western or Chinese scholarship.

In late 1970, the term “Greater China” reappeared with a different definition to promote economic linkages with Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao, Singapore, and the Chinese mainland.²⁰ Thereafter, the emphasis was put on creating a Chinese community with international linkages as a united group. Subsequently, the underlining factors of “Chinese Nation” were envisaged to assimilate all nationalities in the concept of “Greater China” with ethnic and racial affiliations becoming transnational.

The concept of nationalism is related to a feeling of oneness in relation to the territorial limitations of a nation-state, whereby the construction of the “people” of the state distinguish them from the members of another political community.²¹ The discourse takes territorial boundaries as politically defining factors for the rise of nationalist sentiments. In modern times, of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies, this simple formulation of nationalist sentiments based on the nation-state concept is being challenged with issues relating to citizenship, inclusion, and exclusion within a state. This is also due to the fact that sovereign borders no longer exist as rigid boundaries dividing people across nations. The fluid nature of territory is contested and networks beyond territories play bigger roles in linking communities based on race, ethnicity, clan, etc.

Kang Youwei (1858-1927), the leader of monarchist reformers, was

17 Harry Harding, “The Concept of ‘Greater China’: Themes, Variations, and Reservations,” *The China Quarterly* 136 (1993): 662.

18 Ibid.

19 Dikötter, “Race in China,” 180.

20 Harding, “The Concept of ‘Greater China,’” 663.

21 Elena Barabantseva, *Overseas Chinese, Ethnic Minorities and Nationalism: De-centering China* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 5.

the first to formulate the modern ideology of Chinese nationalism and nation-state under the Qing dynasty with the stress on common ancestry and race. The 1909 nationality law reflected this importance of blood and introduced the principle of *jus sanguinis*.²² While Kang Youwei was only referring to the “Yellow race,” the later antimonarchist, especially Sun Yat-sen, used it in terms of a nation with the inclusion of overseas Chinese.²³ The same idea of ethnic linkages of the Chinese Nation became the link to forging a feeling of oneness.

However, the deep-rooted sense of distinguishing barbarians with the civilized Han nationality defines the parameters of individual identity. Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* encapsulates this idea of nationalism that transcends national boundaries to link communities as homogenous entities.²⁴ The imagination of the self attached to a particular community creates the notion of identity whereby the insider is clearly delinked with the outsider. In China’s case, the invoking of this identity was primarily based on the politically defined boundaries of the nation-state, while the Manchu, Tibetan, and Turkish groups fell under the category of ‘outsiders.’ These communities never perceived themselves in the same way as the Han, but there was a factor of alienation even when the territorial nation-state system redefined their existence as elements under a unified political body.

Identity Issues in the Reform Period – Post 1978

The state apparatus has defined minorities based on ethno-racial linkages, but there also exists categories whereby individuals have their own ethnic self-identification. Most minority communities lived in a subservient way within the institutional structures as their voices did not have strong support. However, increasing globalization and access to technology along with relatively better living standards have aroused the consciousness of their own cultural identity. The demands for an independent cultural identity are more prominent, as the conditions provide them the opportunity to link

22 See Pal Nyiri on the history of China-Overseas Chinese relations cited in *China Inside Out: Contemporary Chinese Nationalism and Transnationalism*, eds. Pal Nyiri Joana and Breidenbach (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2005), 148.

23 See Pal Nyiri on the history of China-Overseas Chinese relations cited in *China Inside Out: Contemporary Chinese Nationalism and Transnationalism*, eds. Pal Nyiri Joana and Breidenbach (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2005), 149.

24 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

it to the idea of racism. The issue of identity has also gained supranational mobilization because of transnational actors of multiple nationalities and ethnicity. It has connected them with overseas ethnic populations to help drive the movement.

Prasenjit Duara, a historian of China, looks at the incorporation of minorities in the territorial nation-state narrative, which was dominant before 1980. However, since then a new cultural narrative has led to deterritorialization and the minorities link themselves with newly defined constituencies that have foreign linkages.²⁵ In modern times, the idea of rights has also undergone a transformation. In the nation-building project, the state implicitly gives certain rights to its citizens, like the right to free speech, in exchange for assimilation or incorporation within the territorial nation-state. In the case of China, these rights have been placed under a very broad category of “collective rights of citizens.” When the minority communities demand individual rights like the right to freedom of religion or freedom of expression, these demands often clash with the politically defined national rights granted to the citizens of China. This is because it challenges the Chinese Communist Party ideology, which underplays the role of religion in a state. Although in recent decades the Chinese state has made it clear that it allows all religions to co-exist, religious followers need to do so without explicitly challenging the state.

Even if a state has well-defined and fixed boundaries with a clear sense of territory, the issue is whether the people or groups within the territory have national loyalties associated with the territorial state or not. Scholars also talk of “multi-ethnicity” within the Han nationality, whereby regional dialects and ethnic regions segregate them from one another. The difference in food, dialect, and local gods based on region is why Dikötter considers “Han” to be an artificial construct.²⁶ Hence, within the Han nationality variations exist based on regional affiliations. These in the reform era have become more prominent as the local economies make efforts to grow based on overseas investments and remittances. The *guanxi* relations²⁷ attracted money inflow based on linkages to particular communities where differences of regions and loyalties to territorial groups play a significant role.

25 Prasenjit Duara, “The Legacy of Empires and Nations in East Asia” in *China Inside Out: Contemporary Chinese Nationalism and Transnationalism*, eds. Pal Nyiri Joana and Breidenbach (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2005), 37.

26 Dikötter, “Race in China,” 114.

27 *Guanxi* relations refer to relationship networks for business in China, which are mostly based on clan networks and regional ties.

In January 1994, a group of Chinese scholars from Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong even suggested an idea of a “Federal Republic of China.”²⁸ The proposed draft of the formulated constitution announced in San Francisco called for making a free, democratic Federal Republic of China composed of Autonomous States (including Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, and Guangxi), Special Regions (Hong Kong and Macau), and the rest as Provinces and Cities of China. Yan Jiaqi defined the notion of federation as having the characteristics of a confederation, which would consist of two kinds of republics: Loose Republics (Taiwan, Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau, Xinjiang, and Inner Mongolia) and Close Republics.²⁹ While on the one hand, the idea was based on ethnic affiliations based on identity; on the other, it incorporated the desire of local economies to have autonomous decision making powers. Although the idea was never formalized it nonetheless strongly reflected the desires of local culture, local religion, and local languages as a significant factor in building *guānxi* and strengthening relations over and above the unified notion of Han nationality.

Voices of Discontent within China

The March-April 2008 Tibetan uprising, followed by the July 2009 violent clashes between Uyghurs and Han in Urumqi, Xinjiang province, sparked debate within and outside China over the People’s Republic’s policy towards ethnic minorities. Although the Western world greatly sympathized with the minority nationalities, the nationalist sentiments were a total rejection of such actions, arguing ethnic minorities were creating divisions in the Chinese state. Given the incredibly rapid growth of the Chinese economy, what are the reasons behind dissatisfaction among the minority nationalities?

Many tensions arise due to the enhanced migration of the Han population to minority areas. As the Han population is seen as the threat to local culture and language, there is greater animosity among the local communities and the Han population. While historically the Han population was viewed as the “insider” and the main representative nationality of China, the minority communities believe that in the PRC, whereby politically the regions are assimilated, the Han population is the real “outsider” in

28 “Draft Constitution for a Federal China-Gives Referendum to Tibet,” *Central Tibetan Administration Website*, accessed October 23 2007, www.tibet.com/China/drchcon.html.

29 “Yan Jiaqi, Dissident Essay on Tibet: Towards the Federal Republic of China,” *Free Tibet Website*, accessed October 23 2007, www.freetibet.org/info/file/file21.html.

their regions. The tensions arise due to state policies in which minority communities perceive themselves as unprivileged and subordinate, and the Han population is viewed as the privileged group. The state policy of standardizing language and culture by migrating and amalgamating the Han population in huge numbers into minority community-dominated regions has created greater divide among nationalities.

Although in recent decades there has been a greater focus on developing the minority nationality dominated regions, the minority population remains deeply dissatisfied. One of the factors behind this is that China's economic development has been uneven. The western region, where most of the minority groups are concentrated, lags behind the eastern area concentrated along the coast. Although there has been improvement in the lives of the majority of the population, the minority-dominant areas have increasingly become active in raising dissent against the Communist state. With the spate of events in 2008 and 2009, the Chinese government immediately identified economic development as the central task of ethnic regions. The September 2009 White Paper on Ethnic Policy stated that "the state is convinced that quickening the economic and social development of minority communities and minority areas is the fundamental solution to China's ethnic issues."³⁰ In relation to this, the official media launched propaganda against the anti-China forces operating from outside. It puts the blame of discontent by the ethnic minorities on the forces existing beyond Chinese territories, rather than recognizing that the communities within the territories also demand recognition of their identity along with equal citizenship status.

The recent self-immolation protests of Tibetan monks against Communist rule highlight the fact that the ethnic minorities within China, although assimilated within the political boundaries of the PRC, are not able to enjoy religious and cultural freedom. These issues have been suppressed under the state concept of racial affinities and blood ties of minority nationalities within the PRC. But the transnational linkage of these communities, which was a tool of state nationalism, has become a strong support for raising dissent and awareness at international forums. Hence, in this sense, the concept of the Chinese Nation that was used by the Chinese state to stifle feelings and affinity with the PRC has become a double edged sword. The linkages endorsed by the Chinese state in order to

30 Elena Barabantseva, *Overseas Chinese, Ethnic Minorities and Nationalism: De-centering China* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 161.

promote local economies have transcended beyond economic development objectives to create awareness of the exclusion of communities within the state parameters.

Moreover, the linkages of the Han nationality with overseas Chinese communities are also bringing the issues of language and regional affinities to greater prominence. For example, in Guangdong province, a debate is unfolding over the protection of the Cantonese dialect while the Standard Chinese (*Pǔtōnghuà* 普通话) continues to be the officially approved language for public purposes. The Cantonese communities have started to view the propagation of *Pǔtōnghuà* as suppression of the Cantonese language, which may gradually fall out of use. Hence, the local governments are being pressurized to run TV news broadcasts, serials, and basic teaching programs in schools encouraging the local language. These issues reaffirm the idea of China becoming a federal state, where local power centers would want to play an autonomous and decisive role in local economies and promote local culture.

Conclusion

The leadership of Xi Jinping as the President of the PRC has advocated for realizing the “China Dream.” As discussion over what constitutes the China Dream continues, various interpretations link it to the rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation. This concept transcends the political boundaries of the PRC and links it to communities based on racial affinities. The emergence of the concept can be traced back to the pre-liberation era. However, the Chinese Revolutionary period tried to bring about the unity of all 56 nationalities of the PRC in fighting together against foreign forces.

Although China has made great strides in economic development, the issue of ethnic minorities has become significant. The reason for this also lies in the historic conceptualization of differentiating the *Xià* (civilized) with the *Yí* (barbarians). As the peripheral communities and those outside the core state were viewed as “outsiders,” assimilation remains a political subject, rather than actual recognition by the communities as a unified entity. In the reform era, transnational linkages and technologies have provided adequate avenues for minority communities to raise issues of suppression, exclusion, and citizenship. The demand for inclusion as “equal citizens and equal treatment” has actually intensified.

In addition, the dominant Han nationality is creating overseas

networks that are supplementing the feelings of local identities and cultures. In order to promote local economies, the idea of Greater China and cultural linkages based on the Chinese Nation were promoted by the state, but these ties have gone beyond sub-national economic development agendas and are fermenting a sense of federalism. Yet, the Chinese Nation remains a binding force linking communities within and outside China as “Chinese.” **Y**

ARCTIC ECHOES: POTENTIAL REPERCUSSIONS OF RUSSIA'S RESPONSE TO THE PHILIPPINES V. CHINA

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China's dismissal of the award by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in the Philippines vs. China presents a singular challenge to the international maritime regime centered on the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). While the regional consequences of China's rejection will be profound, there is great potential for the effects of China's stance to set a precedent for more nations to shirk their obligations as parties to UNCLOS. Although a handful of smaller countries have signaled their support for China, likely as a quid pro quo for Chinese aid, of particular note has been Russia's reaction to China's rejection of the ruling. Russian officials have signaled support for the Chinese based on statements that ubiquitously insist that Russia is not choosing sides and that the dispute should be settled by bilateral negotiations. However, such statements signal support for China, as anything other than support for the PCA's ruling undermines the treaty. Russia's backing of China in its dispute illustrates the importance of the Sino-Russian alliance holds in Russian foreign policy and could set a precedent that allows Russia to avoid its obligations under UNCLOS.

As anticipated, the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague (PCA) decided in favor of the Philippines in its territorial dispute with China. Chinese officials were predictably incensed over the ruling with Foreign Minister Wang Yi heatedly accusing the proceedings of being “completely a political farce staged under legal pretext”¹ and the Chinese Foreign Ministry declaring “that the award is null and void and has no binding force. China

1 “Chinese Foreign Minister Says South China Sea Arbitration a Political Farce,” *Xinhua*, July 12, 2016, accessed December 19 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-07/13/c_135508275.htm.

neither accepts nor recognizes it.”² China’s stance has been backed by dozens of nations but of particular significance has been Russia’s response to the award. Russian officials have not always resoundingly endorsed Beijing’s stance in the South China Sea but instead have implicitly supported China by arguing against outside interference in the dispute so that the involved parties can settle it through bilateral negotiations. In contrast, the United States,³ Canada,⁴ Australia,⁵ New Zealand,⁶ India,⁷ Vietnam,⁸ and Japan,⁹ among others,¹⁰ have issued statements noting clearly that China is legally bound to heed the decision of the Arbitral Tribunal. Thus, Russia’s muted support is meaningful because it not only reveals potential Russian reservations about China’s actions, but also demonstrates Russia’s willingness to overcome these reservations and fully commit to its alliance with China, which has become a centerpiece of Russian foreign policy during Vladimir Putin’s tenure. The Russian response is also of particular relevance to the Arctic region because Russia is itself currently a party to maritime boundary arbitration proceedings under the UN Commission on the Limits of

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- 2 “Chinese Leaders Reject S. China Sea Arbitration Award,” *Xinhua* July 12, 2016, accessed December 19 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-07/12/c_135507946.htm.
 - 3 John Kirby, U.S. Department of State, “Decision in the Philippines-China Arbitration,” Press Statement, July 12 2016, accessed December 19, 2016, <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/07/259587.htm>.
 - 4 Stéphane Dion, Global Affairs Canada, “Canadian Statement on South China Sea Arbitration,” News Release, July 21, 2016, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=1102379>.
 - 5 Julie Bishop, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Australia, “Australia Supports Peaceful Dispute Resolution in the South China Sea,” Media Release, July 12, 2016, accessed December 19 2016, http://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/Pages/2016/jb_mr_160712a.aspx.
 - 6 Murray McCully, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of New Zealand, “NZ Comment on South China Sea Tribunal Ruling,” Press Release, July 12, 2016, accessed December 19, 2016, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/nz-comment-south-china-sea-tribunal-ruling>.
 - 7 Ministry of External Affairs of India, “Statement on Award of Arbitral Tribunal on South China Sea Under Annexure VII of UNCLOS,” Press Release, July 12, 2016, accessed December 19, 2016, http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/27019/Statement_on_Award_of_Arbitral_Tribunal_on_South_China_Sea_Under_Annexure_VII_of UNCLOS.
 - 8 “Vietnam Welcomes South China Sea Ruling, Reasserts its Own Claims,” *Reuters*, July 12, 2016, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-ruling-vietnam-idUSKCN0ZS17A>.
 - 9 Fumio Kishida, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Arbitration between the Republic of the Philippines and the People’s Republic of China regarding the South China Sea,” Press Release, July 12 2016, accessed December 19, 2016, http://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_001204.html.
 - 10 Matthew Pennington, “Picking Sides: A World of Opinions on South China Sea Case,” June 13, 2016, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/f77d182647754042a31862481421cacc/picking-sides-world-opinions-south-china-sea-case>.

the Continental Shelf (CLCS).¹¹ Vladimir Putin's decision to support China's repudiation of UNCLOS could portend a similar Russian reaction in the future if the CLCS produces an unfavorable ruling. Ultimately, Russian responses to the PCA's award reveal a reluctance to fully diminish UNCLOS but also an acknowledgement of the precedence the Chinese alliance has assumed in Russian foreign policy under Putin.

The depth of the Chinese anger at the PCA's ruling can perhaps be explained by how comprehensively it undercuts their claims to the lands, waters, and resources of the South China Sea. The PCA rendered a unanimous award in the South China Sea maritime boundary dispute between China and the Philippines, ruling that "there was no legal basis for China to claim historic rights to resources within the sea areas falling within the 'nine-dash line.'"¹² Nullifying the foundation for Chinese claims in the region even further, the PCA ruled that maritime features being disputed were in fact rocks and reefs incapable of sustaining permanent habitation, both currently and historically, and are not entitled to the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) under UNCLOS.¹³ The court also publicly censured China for violating its treaty obligations set out in UNCLOS by its actions in the South China Sea, and specifically rebuked the People's Republic for interfering with the Philippines' fishing and petroleum exploration activities in its EEZ, constructing artificial islands, failing to prevent Chinese fishermen from operating in the Philippines' EEZ, and causing "severe harm" to the coral reef environment and its wildlife in the South China Sea.¹⁴

The wording of the Russian Foreign Ministry's statement, delivered two days after the ruling, reflects the opposing forces motivating Russia's response but fails to acknowledge the totality of the award. On one hand, Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova noted Russian support for the "efforts of ASEAN and the Chinese People's Republic towards working out a code of conduct in the South China Sea" and that "we are not taking any sides in principle... we believe that the involved parties must hold relevant consultations and negotiations in the format they themselves

11 "Donskoi: Russia's Arctic Shelf Expansion Application to Be Reviewed despite Disagreements with Other Countries," *Arctic.ru*, October 3, 2016, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://arctic.ru/geographics/20161003/454690.html>.

12 Permanent Court of Arbitration, "The South China Sea Arbitration (The Republic of the Philippines v. The People's Republic of China)," Press Release, July 12, 2016, accessed December 19, 2016, <https://pca-cpa.org/en/news/pca-press-release-the-south-china-sea-arbitration-the-republic-of-the-philippines-v-the-peoples-republic-of-china/>.

13 *Ibid.*

14 *Ibid.*

determine.”¹⁵ On the other hand, she added that “we highly value the role of the Convention in ensuring supremacy of law in the world ocean,” and that “it is important to have the provisions of this universal international treaty applied consistently.”¹⁶ This could be seen as problematic by the Chinese, as UNCLOS’ legal supremacy and consistent application would result in China being forced to abandon its disputed claims with the Philippines in the Spratly Islands. Still, by merely playing lip service to respect for UNCLOS, and not acknowledging the legality of the PCA’s award, Russia is affirming its support for China’s position.

Russia’s leaders have continued the strategy of implicitly siding with China by advocating for bilateral negotiations, criticizing the United States and its allies, usually obliquely referred to as outside parties, for interfering, and stating that Russia ostensibly has no horse in the race. This stance was established before the PCA’s ruling, with Russian Ambassador to China, Andrey Denisov, mounting a vocal, if still vague, defense of Beijing in the dispute in a June 21, 2016 interview with Russian journalists. He argued that claims by “some world capitals regarding restrictions if not say a threat for the freedom of navigation” are “artificial and have no relation to reality.”¹⁷ He goes on to make calls for discussions between the relevant parties. Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev commented that Russia opposes internationalization of the dispute and called for bilateral negotiations when speaking on the sidelines of the ASEAN summit in Ulaanbaatar on July 15, 2016.¹⁸

After meeting with Xi Jinping, President Putin tried to add some cohesion to the Russian stance by tying together the sometimes oppositional positions asserted by influential Russians on the issue at the G20 summit in Hangzhou on September 5, 2016. There, like other Russian officials, he issued a warning against interference by outside parties and assured his Chinese allies that Russia stands behind their non-recognition of the PCA’s ruling. However, he took great pains to avoid entirely delegitimizing UNCLOS, adding, “this is not a political position, but purely legal. It lies in the fact that any arbitration proceedings should be initiated by the disputing parties,

15 “Moscow Set to Avoid Being Dragged into South China Sea Dispute,” *TASS*, July 14, 2016, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://tass.ru/en/politics/888205>.

16 *Ibid.*

17 “Russian Ambassador: Tensions in South China Sea Created Artificially,” *Tass*, June 21, 2016, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://tass.ru/en/politics/883678>.

18 “Russia Opposes Internationalizing South China Sea Issue: Medvedev,” *Xinhua*, July 15, 2016, accessed December 19, 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-07/15/c_135516298.htm.

while the arbitration court should hear the arguments and positions of the disputing parties.”¹⁹ Putin’s strong defense of China, relative to Medvedev and Zakhárova, is noteworthy because of the explicit reasoning he lays out to support China’s position. He studiously did not attack the legitimacy of UNCLOS and the PCA but questioned its jurisdiction in this specific case. By advocating for this interpretation of the dispute in a high-profile setting on Chinese soil, Putin surely intended it to be the definitive Russian statement on the issue.

Statements by the leaders of the United States and regional powers ,Japan and Australia, highlight the divide between their position and the one taken by Vladimir Putin. Australia’s Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe piqued China by vigorously defending the legitimacy of the PCA’s ruling at the ASEAN summit on September 8, 2016 as they both emphasized its binding nature. Turnbull commented that “the decision in The Hague is a fact, it is a reality,”²⁰ and Abe said, “I hope that both parties to the dispute in the South China Sea will abide by the ruling of the China-Philippines tribunal court, which legally binds the parties to the dispute.”²¹ A week earlier in an interview with *CNN*, US President Barack Obama chided China for its rejection of the judgement, stating that “if you sign a treaty that calls for international arbitration around maritime issues, the fact that you’re bigger than the Philippines or Vietnam or other countries ... is not a reason for you to go around and flex your muscles.”²²

The rhetoric employed by these leaders plainly spells out recognition of and support for the PCA’s decision, in contrast to the Russians calling for bilateral negotiations and Putin’s argument that the PCA lacks the authority to issue a binding ruling in this specific case. It is important to note that not every traditional US ally has signaled their support for the American position.

19 “Russia Supports China’s Stance on South China Sea,” *Sputnik International*, September 5, 2016, accessed December 19, 2016, <https://sputniknews.com/world/20160905/1044988523/russia-china-putin.html>.

20 Liam Cochrane, “Malcolm Turnbull Calls for Peaceful Resolution to East Asia and South China Sea Disputes,” *Australian Broadcasting Corporation News*, September 8, 2016, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-08/turnbull-calls-for-calm-in-south-china-sea/7827470>.

21 “Abe Tells Asian Leaders of ‘Serious Concern’ with China Posturing in South China Sea,” *The Japan Times*, September 8, 2016, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/09/07/national/abe-tells-asean-that-japan-is-seriously-concerned-by-south-china-sea-tension/#.WA1fC1QrLIW>.

22 “Obama Urges China to Stop Flexing Muscles over South China Sea: CNN,” *Reuters*, September 2, 2016, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-obama-relations-idUSKCN1182KX>.

Some European nations have hesitated to jeopardize Chinese business ties and investment by publicly urging Beijing to adhere to the PCA's ruling. Due to these divides, the EU statement on the issue makes no mention of treaty obligations and strenuously avoids using any language that could upset Beijing, but also fails to support Beijing's decision to not recognize the verdict.²³

Vladimir Putin's approach to the South China Sea dispute has crucial implications for Russia's foreign policy and potentially for its Arctic policy. The alliance with China is the most important consideration for Russia's Asian policy. Putting aside decades of mistrust and hostility fostered by Cold War rivalry and historic enmity, the nations signed the Sino-Russian Good Neighborly Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in 2001, which finally settled their border disputes and set out arrangements for deeper economic and military cooperation. Since that agreement, the states have closed many business deals, including landmark oil and gas agreements, the most notable of which was signed in 2014 and will be worth \$400 billion over thirty years.²⁴ The two nations also have close defense ties, with China importing over \$3 billion in arms from Russia in 2013.²⁵ This September, they held joint naval drills in the South China Sea to further demonstrate their solidarity in the wake of the PCA's judgement.²⁶

Given the trade and defense benefits of the alliance with China, it is unsurprising that Russia would back Beijing in the dispute; however, Russia does risk alienating some of its partners in the region. Vietnam also has territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea and has sided with the Philippines in the dispute. Meanwhile, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi has moved to strengthen ties with Vietnam and urged both parties to respect the Arbitral Tribunal's decision in the South China Sea.²⁷ India is

23 Robin Emmott, "EU's silence on South China Sea ruling highlights inner discord," *Reuters*, July 14, 2016, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-southchinasea-ruling-eu-idUKKCN0ZU1CS>.

24 Jane Perlez, "China and Russia Reach 30-Year Gas Deal," *The New York Times*, May 22, 2014, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/22/world/asia/china-russia-gas-deal.html>.

25 Allan Smith and Skye Gould, "This Map of US and Russian Arms Sales Says It All," *Business Insider*, August 13, 2014, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://www.businessinsider.com/arms-sales-by-the-us-and-russia-2014-8>.

26 "China Says to Hold Drills with Russia in South China Sea," *Reuters*, July 28, 2016, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-china-drills-idUSKCN108008>.

27 Sanghamitra Sarma, "India-Vietnam Relations After Modi's Visit," *The Diplomat*, September 5, 2016, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/09/india-vietnam-relations-after-modis-visit>.

the largest importer of Russian arms and Vietnam also has significant arms deals with Russia. Thus, Putin's decision to stand behind China signals that the Sino-Russian alliance is the most significant determinant for Russian foreign policy in Asia, possibly to the detriment of Vietnamese-Russian relations and Indo-Russian relations.

Unlike China, Russia has participated in the international legal proceedings to determine its continental shelf rights in the Arctic Ocean. Russia has submitted a claim for continental shelf rights to a Texas-sized patch of the Arctic seafloor to the CLCS, which confers less rights and differs from China's claims to an EEZ in the South China Sea. However, they are consequential when it comes to transit rights and natural resource extraction and Russia has vigorously defended and enhanced its claim in the Arctic.

Under Vladimir Putin, the Russian practice of *maskirovka*, or Russian military deception, has enjoyed a comeback. He has obfuscated the truth during the Russian takeover of Crimea,²⁸ Russian sources have frequently changed their story in regards to flight MH 17 while always denying any Russian participation.²⁹ Putin insisted that the priority of the Russian campaign in Syria is to fight Islamic extremists, when evidence has shown that they often target the moderate opposition and their main goal is propping up the Assad regime.³⁰ If the CLCS eventually rules unfavorably for Russia, it is conceivable that Putin could still assert Russia's rights to the territory by seizing upon the same rationalization as China because of the profound lack of any serious mechanism to enforce an award. This possibility cannot be dismissed as far-fetched because by annexing Crimea, Putin has demonstrated that he is unafraid to upset the rules-based international order. Not to mention, his comments on the ruling were hardly a resounding commitment to UNCLOS.

China is well positioned to ignore the PCA's award because its hard military power resources in the South China Sea are far greater than other nations in the region, especially with the ongoing construction of the so-called "Great Wall of Sand"³¹ in the South China Sea. Due to the imbalance of its

28 "Putin Reveals Secrets of Russia's Crimea Takeover Plot," *BBC News*, March 9, 2015, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31796226>.

29 Olga Ivshina, "Flight MH17: Russia and its Changing Story," *BBC News*, October 16, 2015, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34538142>.

30 Laura Smith-Spark, Jomana Karadesh, and Euan McKirdy, "Activists: 3,800 Syrian civilians killed in a year of Russian airstrikes," *CNN*, September 30, 2016, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/09/30/middleeast/un-aleppo-condemnation/>.

31 Bill Gertz, "China's South China Sea Island Buildup 'For Military Purposes,'" *The National Interest*, October 11, 2016, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/>

military resources in the area compared to the Chinese, the only possible way Manila could enforce the ruling is with American support. However, ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and the need to check Russian expansion in Eastern Europe leave American forces overcommitted and such a scenario seems altogether unlikely.

Comparable to China's position in the South China Sea, Russia has far more strategic assets in the Arctic than the US and its NATO partners. In the summer of 2016, Russia launched the *Arktika*, the first of three new generation nuclear-powered icebreakers intended to patrol the Northern Sea Route.³² In total, the Russians currently have six nuclear-powered icebreakers besides *Arktika*, in addition to more than 30 diesel vessels, while the Americans have three, non-nuclear icebreakers. If Russia were to reject an unfavorable CLCS award, Russia's support for China in the South China Sea would almost certainly result in a quid pro quo resulting in Chinese backing Russian claims in the Arctic.

Subsequently, Putin's strong defense of China's position at the G20 summit—in contrast to the Foreign Ministry's earlier more cautious statement—is the result of Russian policymakers assessing that a firm commitment to the Sino-Russian alliance is of primary importance in their foreign policy. But, because of this posture, Russia risks alienating previously friendly countries in Asia, particularly Vietnam and India, because of their historic grievances and stated opposition to China's expansionism in the South China Sea. Putin's legal maneuvering that allowed him to back China's rationalization of its decision to not participate in the PCA's proceedings not only weakens the legitimacy of UNCLOS, but it also opens the possibility that Russia may be willing to abandon its commitment to the international maritime order founded on UNCLOS if it loses its case at the CLCS. As a result, the consequences of China's actions in the South China Sea may ripple outwards from the balmy waters of the South China Sea all the way to the frigid depths of the Arctic. **Y**

chinas-south-china-sea-island-buildup-%E2%80%98-military-purposes%E2%80%99-18006.

32 David Hambling, "Russia Built a Big, Bad Nuclear-Powered Icebreaker to Win the Arctic," *Popular Mechanics*, June 23, 2016, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://www.popularmechanics.com/military/navy-ships/a21484/russia-nuclear-powered-icebreaker/>.

BOKO HARAM ISLAMIST INSURGENCY IN NIGERIA: TRANSNATIONAL DIMENSIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEACE AND SECURITY

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Unlike previous anti-state movements in Nigeria, Boko Haram is unique in terms of its avowed objectives, organization, tenacity, sophisticated strategy, weaponry, and audacious operations. Causes of the insurgency are varied and complex. While some observers conceive of Boko Haram as an extremist Islamist sect bent on Islamizing Northern Nigeria by any means, others see it as a mere nihilist movement with the sole intent of bloodletting, destruction, panic, and chaos. Yet, in some other quarters, Boko Haram is viewed as the epitome of the political agenda of certain Northern elements. In spite of the government's efforts, the crisis persists unabated, leaving in its wake the wholesale destruction of lives and property, palpable tension, and fear of the unknown. Over time, the conflict transnationalized across international borders within the West African region. This paper therefore examines the transnational dimensions and challenges of the Nigeria-Boko Haram conflict, as well as the opportunities for achieving sustainable peace and security. The study adopts the historical descriptive and analytical method.

Boko Haram is an Islamist terrorist movement that had been in latent existence in Northeastern Nigeria for many decades before its full emergence in 2009 when it launched its first terrorist operations against the Nigerian state, individuals, and institutions. During the early stages of its life, Boko Haram's operations occurred mainly in Nigeria's northeast region, particularly in the Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States. However, Boko Haram's attack on the United Nations (UN) Headquarters in Nigeria's capital of Abuja on August 26, 2011 signaled the transformation of the movement from a solely Nigerian phenomenon into an international Salafist jihadist organization. Ever since, the internationalization of the Boko Haram conflict has manifested in the

extension of attacks and operations by the group to areas around and within the sovereign territories of states like Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and Mali. This paper is a historical discourse of the evolving transnational dimensions and challenges of the Nigeria-Boko Haram conflict. The study shall also explore available opportunities within multinational frameworks for successfully resolving the insurgency and achieving sustainable peace and security in Africa.

Evolving Transnational Dimensions and Challenges of Boko Haram Operations

Since its audacious attack on the UN building in Abuja in 2011, Boko Haram's profile as an international terrorist organization has continued to soar. However, the origin of Boko Haram's evolution towards international orientation dates back to August 2009 when its interim leader, Sanni Umaru (instated after the death of former substantive leader, Mohammed Yusuf), announced an ideological declaration regarding the movement's objectives and mode of operations. According to Umaru:

In fact, we are spread across all the 36 States in Nigeria, and Boko Haram is just a version of Al-Qaeda, which we align with and respect. We support Osama Bin Laden, we shall carry out his command in Nigeria until the country is completely converted to Islam, which is according to the wish of Allah.¹

It was thus not surprising that documents discovered in Bin Laden's compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, many years later indicated that very senior Boko Haram leaders had maintained contacts with Al-Qaeda since one and a half years prior.² There is reason to believe that Ansaru, Boko Haram's dominant splinter group, was indeed a creation by Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and that a close operational relationship exists between the two organizations. Ansaru, though a splinter group, operates as the transnational wing of Boko Haram. In early 2010, AQIM's

1 David Doukhan, "Who are You, Boko Haram?" *International Institute for Counter-Terrorism*, accessed September 4, 2015, <https://www.ict.org.il/Article/991/Registration.aspx>.

2 Jason Burke, "Bin Laden Files Show Al-Qaeda and Taliban Leaders in Close Contact," *The Guardian*, April 29, 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/apr/29/bin-laden-al-qaida-taliban-contact>.

leader, Abdelmalik Droukdel, publicly presented an offer of assistance to Boko Haram. In early July of the same year, Abubakar Shekau, who had claimed leadership of the organization, declared in a video statement his preparedness to launch attacks against western targets in Nigeria. Then on July 13 of that year, Shekau in another statement expressed solidarity with Al-Qaeda and openly threatened the US. It was within the context of these and other assertions of international intent that Boko Haram launched a suicide bomb attack against the UN building in Abuja on August 26, 2011, killing 23 people and injuring over 80 others. Significantly, that attack was the first time the group struck an international, non-Nigerian target. Nigerian authorities later identified the key organizer of the attack as Mamman Nur, described as “a notorious Boko Haram element with Al-Qaeda links who returned recently from Somalia.”³

Boko Haram fighters played a prominent role in the assault on Algeria’s consulate in Gao, northern Mali, in April 2011. Then, in November 2012, Boko Haram reinforced AQIM and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) to capture the town of Menaka in Gao of eastern Mali. On December 19, 2012, Ansaru claimed responsibility for the kidnapping of a 63-year-old French engineer, Francis Colump, after 30 gunmen attacked his residence in Katsina State in Northern Nigeria. The sect acted in retaliation against certain French government policies such as the ban on wearing the Islamic veil and its intervention in Northern Mali.⁴ On February 19, 2013, Boko Haram militants kidnapped a French family of seven on vacation near the Waza National Park in northern Cameroon. Although the armed group had earlier threatened to kill the hostages if they were not paid a ransom fee of three million dollars, the captives were released two months later after weeks of secret meetings between the group and the French government.⁵

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- 3 “Profile: Boko Haram,” *Aljazeera English*, January 19, 2015, accessed September 4, 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2012/01/20121974241393331.html>; “UN Bombing: SSS Declares al-Qaeda Associate Wanted,” *Gboozal! The African Social News Network*, September 1, 2011, accessed September 4, 2015, <http://www.gboozal.com/group/crime/forum/topics/un-bombing-sss-declares-al-queda-associate-wanted#axzz2qjiBFKy5>.
- 4 Anne Look, “Nigerian Islamist Sect Claims Kidnap of French Engineer,” *VOA News*, December 24, 2012, accessed September 7, 2015, <http://www.voanews.com/a/nigerian-islamist-sect-claims-it-kidnapped-french-engineer/1571379.html>; Jacob Zenn, “Boko Haram’s International Connections,” *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, January 14, 2013, accessed September 7, 2015, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/boko-harams-international-connections>; Zenn, “Boko Haram’s Evolving Tactics and Alliances in Nigeria,” *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, June 25, 2013, accessed September 7, 2015, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/boko-harams-evolving-tactics-and-alliances-in-nigeria>.
- 5 Tansa Musa, “Kidnapped French Family of Seven Released in Cameroon,” *Reuters*, April 19, 2013, accessed September 7, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-cameroon-kidnapping>.

Further, Boko Haram killed a Nigerian Christian missionary affiliated with the Christian Missionary Foundation (CMF), David Mataware, and burnt many churches in Cameroon on November 13, 2013. The same day, Boko Haram and Ansaru coordinated the kidnapping of a French Priest, Father Georges Vandenbeusch.⁶ From November 15-17 that year, the Islamist militants also launched violent attacks along the porous Nigeria-Cameroon border, resulting in the death of at least four people and injuring many, and the destruction of several properties, including churches.⁷ On December 19, 2013, Boko Haram fighters launched a cross-border attack from Cameroon against the Kur Mohammed Military Barracks in Bama, Borno State, Nigeria. The assault by hundreds of Boko Haram insurgents resulted in the sacking of the barracks, as well as the death of five civilians, 15 Nigerian soldiers, and over 50 insurgents.⁸

Boko Haram's international terror campaign intensified significantly from 2014 with attacks in countries like Niger and Chad, in addition to Cameroon, which had been a consistent target since 2013. In 2014 alone, Boko Haram attacks accounted for about one third of civilian deaths from conflicts throughout Africa.⁹ An AFP news agency report from January 12, 2015 revealed that the Islamist terror group had attacked a military base in Kolofata, northwestern Cameroon, making its inhabitants flee the city.¹⁰ The attack also compelled Cameroon President Paul Biya to call for urgent international military help to stop the incessant cross-border attacks

idUSBRE93101820130419; "Nigeria's Boko Haram 'Got \$3m Ransom' to Free Hostages," *BBC News*, April 27, 2013, accessed September 7, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-22320077>.

6 "Nigeria's Boko Haram Strikes Again in Cameroon," *World Watch Monitor*, December 4, 2013, accessed September 7, 2015, https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2013/11/article_2858300.html/.

7 *Ibid.*

8 Nnenna Ibeh, "15 Soldiers, 50 Boko Haram Terrorists, Five Civilians Killed in Bama Attack, Counterattack-Nigerian Military," *Premium Times*, December 24, 2013, accessed September 7, 2013; Kingsley Omonobi and Chris Ochayi, "We Lost 15 Soldiers to Boko Haram Attack -Defence Hdqtrs," *Vanguard*, December 25, 2013, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/12/lost-15-soldiers-boko-haram-attack-defence-hqtrs>.

9 Lonel Zamfir, "African-led Counter-terrorism Measures Against Boko Haram," *European Parliamentary Research Service*, March 9, 2015, accessed September 3, 2015, <https://epthinktank.eu/2015/03/09/african-led-counter-terrorism-measures-against-boko-haram/>; "ACAPS Briefing Note - Nigeria: Boko Haram Insurgency," *Reliefweb*, January 20, 2015, accessed September 8, 2015, <http://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/acaps-briefing-note-nigeria-boko-haram-insurgency-20-january-2015>.

10 "Boko Haram Raids Cameroon Army Base," *Aljazeera*, January 13, 2015, accessed October 31, 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2015/01/boko-haram-attacks-cameroon-military-base-2015112133225785766.html>.

into Cameroon by Boko Haram fighters, who were reportedly controlling Nigerian territories bordering Cameroon, Niger, and Chad. It is worth noting that Nigeria's national borders with Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger stretch about 4,047 square kilometers, are complex to manage, and also cut across ethnic groups, communities, and families, with centuries of close socio-cultural and economic links that defy the physical separation posed by borders alone.¹¹ Boko Haram has clearly taken advantage of this permeability, expanding past borders and adding areas neighboring Nigeria with relative ease of access to their terrorism agenda.

The insurgency spread to Chad on February 13, 2015, when the militants crossed Lake Chad in four motorized boats and attacked the Ngouboua village, killing at least 12 persons, including the village chief, and setting parts of the village ablaze before being repelled by Chadian soldiers.¹² On June 15, 2015, following a foiled attack on Niger earlier in February, Boko Haram attacked two Nigerian villages, Lamina and Ungumawo on in the Diffa region, where its fighters killed at least 38 persons and set fire to many houses. Boko Haram again attacked Chad on the nights of July 4 and 5, 2015. During the night attacks on two Chadian villages, Merom and Tiskra on Lake Chad, the terror group killed 26 persons and burned down several houses.¹³ The insurgents also staged other cross-border attacks in July, resulting in many deaths and the destruction of property.¹⁴ On September 3, 2015, female Boko Haram suicide bombers attacked a crowded market in Kerewa, and an infirmary near a military camp in Northern Cameroon, where explosions killed about 30 people and injured 145 others.¹⁵ In December 2015, Boko Haram insurgents launched four attacks within 24 hours on villages in Chad, Cameroon, and Niger, resulting in the death of at least seven people.¹⁶ More recently, on June 3, 2016, the Islamist insurgents launched

11 "Report: Boko Haram Attacks Cameroon," *Deutsche Welle*, December 1, 2015, , <http://dw.com/p/1EJ2I>; Oghogho Obayuwana, "Global Coalition Against Terrorism in Nigeria," *Guardian News*, May 21, 2014, accessed September 9, 2015, <http://barasolutions.com/mainGuardian/news/national-news/162432-global-coalition-against-terrorism-in-nigeria>.

12 "Boko Haram Launches First Attack in Chad," *VOA News*, February 13, 2015, accessed September 8, 2015, <http://www.voanews.com/a/boko-haram-attack-on-chad-village/2641872.html>.

13 "Boko Haram Crisis: Attack in Niger Kills Dozens," *BBC News*, June 18, 2015, accessed September 10, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-33186154>.

14 *Ibid.*; "Boko Haram Slit Throats of 26 Civilians in Chad," *Aljazeera*, July 9, 2015, accessed September 10, 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/07/haram-slit-throats-26-civilians-chad-150708171934359.html>.

15 Bill Roggio and Caleb Weiss, "Female Suicide Bombers Continue to Strike in West Africa," *Long War Journal*, December 4, 2015, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://lonwarjournal.org/archives/2015/12/female-suicide-bombers-continue-to-strike-in-west-africa.php>.

16 Madjiasra Nako and Abdoulaye Massalaki, "Suspected Boko Haram Fighters Launch Four Strikes

a devastating attack on a military outpost in Bosso, a town in southeastern Niger, on the Nigeria-Niger border, and killed at least 32 people (30 Nigerian civilians and two Nigerian soldiers), and forced about 50,000 others to flee.¹⁷ The recent spate of cross-border attacks against Cameroon, Chad, and Niger by Boko Haram may have been launched in retaliation against the evolving West Africa multinational military intervention. The preceding rendition of the litany of Boko Haram's cross-border operations within the West African sub-region is a clear indication that the group has now fully transformed from an originally Nigerian problem into a sub-regional threat that presents serious transnational challenges.

Threats to national security and destabilization currently confront Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger, Chad, and even the entire region due to Boko Haram's mounting terror campaign. Human security is also threatened in view of the huge and growing casualties of the insurgency, spate of kidnappings, and wanton destruction of property. It is even alleged that Boko Haram has taken possession of some missing Libyan shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles called Man-Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS), for likely attacks against commercial planes flying into Chad, Niger, and possibly Nigeria.¹⁸ The humanitarian problems and challenges created by the heightening cross-border violence are increasingly serious and complex. Apart from the huge number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) created by the conflict within Nigeria itself, about 40,000 Nigerian refugees are currently in Niger, and about 28,000 in Cameroon.¹⁹ Due to the destruction of hospitals and other health facilities in Northeastern Nigeria by Boko Haram, many residents now seek medical attention in neighboring countries, particularly Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, further stretching the limited facilities in those countries. In addition, Boko Haram's cross-border kidnappings and violence have acted as disincentives to tourism and economic development in countries such as

on Lake Chad Area," *Reuters*, December 23, 2015, accessed November 1, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-violence-chad-idUSKBN0U614M20151223>.

17 "32 Troopes Killed in Clash with Boko Haram Fighters - Defense Ministry," *Vanguard*, June 4, 2016, 2016, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://vanguardngr.com/2016/06/32-troopes-killed-clash-boko-haram-fighters-defence-ministry/>.

18 Freedom C. Onuoha, "A Danger Not to Nigeria Alone – Boko Haram's Transnational Reach and Regional Responses," Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Peace and Security Series No. 17, http://www.academia.edu/9605960/A_Danger_not_to_Nigeria_Alone_Boko_Haram_s_Transnational_Reach_and_Regional_Responses; David Ignatius, "Libyan Missiles on the Loose," *The Washington Post*, May 8, 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/libyan-missiles-on-the-loose/2012/05/08/gIQA1FCUBU_story.html.

19 Onuoha, "A Danger Not To Nigeria Alone"; Ignatius, "Libyan Missiles on the Loose."

Benin, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad, whose economies are tied to Nigeria's.²⁰ The net effect of the Boko Haram insurgency on West Africa is an additional heavy burden on the stability and well-being of an already fragile sub-region.

Transnational Opportunities for Peace and Security

Transnational initiatives against crime in West Africa date back to the period before Boko Haram's creation and uprising. The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) comprising Nigeria, Chad, and Niger was established in 1998 to fight international crime within the Lake Chad region.²¹ The force, however, remained inactive for the most part until 2012 when it was restarted to tackle the Boko Haram menace. There is need to note that at the onset of the insurgency in Nigeria in 2009, Nigeria's West African neighbors did not display any serious concern about the crisis. It would appear that they viewed Boko Haram as simply a Nigerian problem to be solved by Nigeria alone. The escalation of the conflict and its attendant threats into Cameroon, Niger, Chad, Mali, and other regions since 2011 was the main factor that changed this perception. Thus, the transnational threats and challenges of Boko Haram opened up opportunities for the restoration of peace and security to the affected countries through multilateral channels and approaches.

On May 17, 2014, the Paris Summit among the heads of the government of Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria, and Niger, along with representatives of the US, United Kingdom (UK), and European Union (EU), was hosted by France, resolving to strengthen African regional collaboration and strategy against Boko Haram through the pooling and sharing of intelligence and information, coordinated border surveillance, and patrols. In October 2014, member states of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) agreed upon greater cooperation on measures against Boko Haram, and pledged contribution of military forces to the MNJTF, which was scheduled to begin counterinsurgency operations within national borders from November 2014. But by early 2015, Boko Haram captured the MNJTF headquarters and its host town, Baga, in Northeast Nigeria.²² The raiding of the task force from its headquarters was a huge blow to the West African multinational anti-Boko Haram initiative at its rudimentary stage. For the terror group, the territorial

20 Ibid.

21 Zamfir, "African-led Counter-terrorism Measures against Boko Haram."

22 Ibid.; Martin Williams and agencies, "African Leaders Pledge 'Total War' on Boko Haram after Nigeria Kidnap," *The Guardian*, May 17, 2014, accessed September 11, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/17/west-african-countries-must-unite-fight-boko-haram-nigeria>.

gains meant greater mobility and maneuverability to launch further cross-border attacks.

Following the call by the UN Security Council (UNSC) President for a boost in the operational capacity of the MNJTF on January 20, 2015, the government leaders of 13 West African and Central African States, excluding Nigeria, converged to deliberate upon the establishment of a multinational counterinsurgency force. The African Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) endorsed the MNJTF during its meeting on January 29, 2015. The AU gave approval for the deployment of the MNJTF, which was made up of 7,500 military and non-military personnel, for a period of 12 months in the first instance, and this was to be renewable.²³ Under this arrangement, the mission would seek to ensure a secure environment, restore state authority, and facilitate humanitarian assistance in the affected areas. Experts of the MNJTF member states assisted by AU experts met in Yaounde, Cameroon from February 5-7, 2015 to wrap up the operational details of the mission against Boko Haram. Some other African regional, bilateral, and multi-lateral stakeholders such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), UN, EU, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) also participated in the expert summit. The meeting made the following decisions to proceed with:

- a. Establishment of a new headquarters in N'Djamena, Chad;
- b. Establishment of a safe and secure environment in the territories affected by the activities of Boko Haram and other terrorist groups in order to drastically reduce violence against civilians and other abuses such as sexual and gender-based violence;
- c. Enhancement of the implementation of overall stabilization programs by the LCBC member-states and Benin in the affected areas, including the full restoration of state authority and the return of IDPs and refugees; and
- d. Facilitation of humanitarian operations and delivery of

23 Lake Chad Basin Commission and Benin, "Experts Meeting on the Elaboration of Operational Documents for the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) of the Member States of the Lake Chad Commission and Benin Against the Boko Haram Terrorist Group," February 5-7, 2015, <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/final-communique-7-2-2015.pdf>.

assistance to the affected populations.²⁴

In addition, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Benin announced contributions of 8,700 military, police, and civilian personnel to the force.²⁵ These meetings, plans, and expressions of intent have not halted the growing transnationalization of Boko Haram and its accompanying threat largely because the AU, ECOWAS, and other regional economic communities (RECs) have not implemented adequate African ownership and leadership of the multinational peace and security interventionist project.

Boko Haram's Islamist extremism has also provided an opportunity for further US intervention in the region. Since Muhammadu Buhari's new presidency began, the US has provided more decisive deployments of military personnel including advisers, training, intelligence and logistical personnel, and equipment for Nigeria and the MNJTF to combat Boko Haram. Previously in 2014, the US launched regular drone missions over Nigeria. In 2015, the US government provided quiet support to the militaries of Cameroon, Niger, and Chad in their cross-border counter insurgency operations in Northeast Nigeria. The US is currently providing about \$71 million dollars' worth of equipment, logistical support, and training for Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad to effectively execute the MNJTF mandate.²⁶ There are, however, concerns that the fresh impetus for US interventions against Boko Haram is largely motivated by the need to curb the growing influence of China in West Africa.²⁷ While outside help may be useful, it is crucial for Nigeria and Africa as a whole to take full responsibility, ownership, and leadership of the fight against Boko Haram and other threats to regional peace and security.

Conclusion

On the basis of its ideology, strategy, funding, and operational targets and reach, Boko Haram has transformed from an originally Nigerian insurgency

24 Ibid.; Zamfir, "African-led Counter-terrorism Measures against Boko Haram."

25 Ibid.

26 "United States Support to Counter Boko Haram," US Department of State, February 11, 2016, accessed November 1, 2016, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/02/252399.htm>.

27 Thomas Gaist, "US Preparing Direct Military Intervention in Nigeria," *World Socialist Web Site*, May 30, 2015, accessed September 16, 2015 <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2015/05/30/nige-j12.html>; Lindsey German, "Western Intervention will turn Nigeria into an African Afghanistan," *The Guardian*, May 6, 2014, accessed December 19, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/may/06/western-intervention-nigeria-kidnapped-girls-corruption-boko-haram>.

into a West African phenomenon, with the potential for further extension to other parts of Africa. Boko Haram transformed into a transnational Islamist insurgent activist (within West Africa so far) due to the Nigerian government's inability to nip it in the bud at the outset. The West African and other African governments are culpable, too, for not providing an appropriate regional response to help Nigeria check the insurgency before it got out of hand and ultimately developed a regional dimension. West Africa's porous international borders also provided additional impetus for the transnationalization of Boko Haram. Instead of a swift collective response to Boko Haram's emergence, other African states, especially Nigeria's West African neighbors, adopted a nonchalant attitude in the false belief that the conflict was strictly a Nigerian problem that would remain localized and was to be solved by her alone.

The resultant transnational challenges and threats of Boko Haram eventually compelled collective responses from West African states and the rest of Africa in the form of interventions and initiatives from multilateral and regional organizations. But the desired de-escalation and termination of the conflict and its destructive effects has yet to be achieved. In order to effectively tackle the menace of Boko Haram and similar insurgent movements, there is an urgent need for African states to adequately strengthen cross-border security so as to deny militant anti-state organizations of resources and strategic opportunities, space, and maneuverability. Second, for prompt and result-oriented operationalization of the multinational force, member countries have to change their age-old attitude of focusing more on their respective national interests and pride to emphasize a regional approach. Third, although the exact number of Boko Haram's militants is yet unknown, the sheer devastating magnitude of its operations and vast recruitment opportunities suggest the need for a substantial increase in the size of the multinational force fighting against this threat. Fourth, to address the crucial issue of financing multinational military operations, the UN, AU, ECOWAS, and other African RECs should jointly create a broad-based international fund. Related to this, the aforementioned international stakeholders and others alike should also take decisive steps to undermine Boko Haram's funding, particularly from international sources. Finally, non-military counter-insurgency measures are also required. It is imperative for the Nigerian and other African governments to seriously tackle the seemingly intractable issues of youth unemployment, poverty, and flagrant violations of the fundamental rights of ordinary citizens by state security forces, which are strong pull-factors for radicalization, extremism, and insurgent recruitment. For the Nigerian and multinational military forces to win the insurgency war,

they have to win the confidence, trust, and support of their host communities and other affected territories. **Y**